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A Phenomenological Study of Elementary Students in Dance Classes

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Abstract

Dance is a language with a variety of structures communicating unique messages. The elements of dance are used to communicate these messages. The products are lived experiences. Using the phenomenological theories of Husserl, the connections to dance of Sheets-Johnstone, and the cognitive studies of Piaget, the purpose of this study was to examine the reflective process as a participant, performer, and audience member within the elementary school dance class. The opinions and ideas of elementary students are not represented within current research and administrators do not consider the students' voices when developing dance education programming. This phenomenological study describes the assimilation of the elements of dance after experiencing class as well as the cognitive, kinesthetic, and creative reflections of the dance classes in the words and artwork of the participants. All participants are students at a public elementary school in the Mid-Atlantic Region of the United States. The participants experienced dance classes, some completed video recorded interviews, and all created artwork. Through selective coding, the results indicated that elementary students have fun learning and imagining in the dance class environment; further results described happiness and relaxation with the dance class experience. These results will hopefully inspire administrators and policy makers to consider more dance education programming throughout the United States to meet the cognitive, kinesthetic, and creative needs of the elementary school students.

Keywords: phenomenological, dance, education, cognitive, creative, kinesthetic

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my students who are a constant inspiration for my learning, growth, and creativity. Secondly, to my parents who provided me with the opportunity to dance at age three and continued to support me when I chose Dance Education as a career path. Finally, to my family, friends, and colleagues who were a constant support in this doctoral journey.

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction to the Problem

Dance class is a place to explore, discover, and express oneself. Dance is both an outward and inward communication revealing creative processes, physical abilities, and cognitive awareness (Minton & Faber, 2016; Robinson, 2015; Sheets-Johnstone, 2015b). While dance classes are typically not available in public elementary schools, previous studies (e.g., Minton & Faber, 2016) have shown that dance class increases communication and fosters cognitive development in elementary-aged children. However, the current literature fails to directly examine the phenomenological experiences of students who participate in dance classes. This study represents a qualitative analysis of elementary school students who participated in a before-school dance program to analyze their thoughts, feelings, and experiences that occur while dancing. This study describes the experiences and reflections of elementary students participating in before-school dance classes in a public elementary school.

Utilizing a qualitative approach and a phenomenological design, I will observe and teach dance integration lessons to 20 elementary students, document and video record class performances, and conduct one-on-one interviews with 10 of the 20 elementary school students to provide insight into the experiences and reflections that these students have about their dance classes. The connection between the cognitive, creative, and physical processes of dance learning will be explored using the elements of dance detailed by Husserl (1913, 1931), Sheets-Johnstone (2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b), Piaget (1962, 1947), and Spratt (2016).

Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem

With the implementation of the 21st Century Skills framework (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011) and the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) (2015; Hess & Eden, 2017) into classrooms across the United States, the definition of a well-rounded education changed to include a focus on critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. Twenty-First Century Learning is a program that has been developed by teachers and education experts (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011). This foundation focuses directly on the skills that students need to succeed within and outside of the classroom in the current economic, social, and political climate (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2011). Specifically, ESSA declared the education of every student must include the arts, and, as a result, dance as an academic discipline is part of the curriculum. Educators from mathematics and science (Rosenfeld, 2011, 2013, 2017; Skoning & Wegner, 2016; Valverde & Cochrane, 2014; Wolfe, 2014) to the humanities (Smith, Kulinna, Vissicaro, & Fredrickson, 2016; The Kennedy Center, 2014; Ulmer, 2015; Ward, 2013) have involved dance in their work. Robinson (2015) discussed that, while dance is a rarity in most school systems, students still need opportunities for collaboration, communication, critical analysis, and creative problem solving in a kinesthetic focused environment. Faber (2016) further discussed a connection between motor development and neurological development so more dance education programs are necessary to promote this development.

To provide a model for dance in educational settings, Gilbert (2006) developed a brain-compatible dance class structure. Incorporating the neurological research of

Hannaford's (2005) book *Smart Moves,* Gilbert (2006) provided dance educators with an overview of the appropriate dance content to teach based on a student's neurological development. Each dance class included warming up, exploring a concept, developing skills, creating, and cooling down. Based on the age of the students, the concept and skills changed depending on the part of the brain developing at that time. While Gilbert's class structure focused on the connection of the brain and body, it also focused on understanding how the development of this connection impacted the overall development of the students. The structure of this dance class focused on content but did not explore the experience of the students. Minton and Faber (2016) reinforced Gilbert's work and further discussed the cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic connections students experience in dance class. This process of exploration has a different representation in each individual brain (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015b). As the exploration process continues, the cognitive connections are shown through the replication of the movements students perform in class (Hanna, 2015; Husserl, 1931; Minton & Faber, 2016; Sheets-Johnstone, 2015b, 2011).

Spratt (2016) prepared a guide of more than 130 lessons detailing how dance instruction integrates with other academic disciplines including science, math, and language arts. Spratt's guide includes learning goals, assessments, worksheets, posters, and flashcards to assist dance educators with resources for complete lessons. The assessments detail the goals and skills, but do not elicit individual responses from students about their dance experience during class. Further studies from Leonard (2014) and Leonard, Hellenbrand, and McShane-Hellenbrand (2014) explored collaboration and

creativity with dance programming in an elementary school but did not focus solely on the experiences and reflections of the students.

Tembrioti and Tsangaridou (2014) reviewed the reflective practice of dance in the literature but focused on higher education and the definition of reflective practice rather than exploring the reflections of elementary aged students. Multiple studies have explored arts integration within a school setting as well as the impact of this integration on the overall curriculum (Carney, Weltsek, Hall, & Brinn, 2016; May & Brenner, 2016; Lackey & Huxhold, 2016; Rosenfeld, 2017). However, these studies also did not include the voices of the students in their results. Giguere (2015) compared action research to the purposes and practices of dance education; this study included connections between reflective teaching practice and the voices of the students and teachers but did not focus on the experiences and reflections of the students in dance class.

Statement of the Problem

Dance classes provide students the opportunity to express themselves in a kinesthetic and cognitive way reflecting the elements of dance and the creative process. Previous studies discuss the cognitive connections that may be made within a child's brain through various types of dance. Researchers discuss the benefits of dance education, but few explore the lived experience and reflections of students in the dance classroom. Dance education and programming, and the cognitive connections created therein, are beneficial to children's developing minds. However, this programming may not be effective at specifically targeting and resonating with the lived experiences of the students who participate within the dance classes. Presently, students' opinions and ideas

are not represented within current research, and administrators do not consider the students' voices when developing dance education programming. This study seeks to remedy this gap in the literature by specifically documenting children's lived experiences while participating in dance education, in order to more fully consider their responses when developing future dance education programming.

Purpose of the Study

Without dance education, students have few opportunities to engage in creative problem solving, critical analysis, communication, and collaboration in an arts-enhanced environment. Little research outside of anecdotal evidence exists to support the inclusion of a dance curriculum. Within the context of this study, I provide insight into the students' perspectives of their own dance experiences. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the cognitive, kinesthetic, and creative experiences of elementary students in dance classes. I seek to do so through the exploration of how elementary students describe their experiences and reflections during a dance class.

Research Questions

1. What are the experiences of elementary students regarding assimilation of the elements of dance after participation in before-school dance classes?

2. What are the reflections of elementary students about the cognitive, kinesthetic, and creative processes after participation in before-school dance classes?

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance for the Study

A qualitative study with a phenomenological research design will be utilized to explore commonalties of the lived experiences of elementary students in before-school dance classes at a public elementary school. Phenomenological research is done to discover the lifeworld of the participants and what it means to them (Husserl, 1913; Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Phenomenology describes the consciousness of individuals and their unique experience of a phenomenon (Husserl, 1913; Johnson & Christensen, 2014; van Manen, 1990). Alternatively, grounded theory focuses on four important characteristics: fit, understanding, generality, and control (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). These four characteristics are supported by data and are not specific to a small group of people or a specific situation, and therefore can be widely generalizable. Although grounded theory corresponds to real-world data, this research design fits its data to a specific bounded system, whereas a phenomenological design relies on the unique responses of the individual regarding his or her lived experience.

Case study research provides details about a specific system (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Rather than focusing on the individuals, case studies concentrate on the bounded system. Phenomenology describes the individual experience of consciousness, whereas case studies describe how all the individual experiences come together. This study will utilize a phenomenological research design as it is the most effective at capturing the essence of an individual's unique experience and does not confine the students to a prescribed set of data or a bounded system. Through the exploration of the cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic processes in elementary school

dance classes, phenomenology will allow these students to describe their discoveries, discussions, and demonstrations of their lived experiences.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions provide an overview of terms incorporated in the study:

Curriculum: The structure, content, engagement, and atmosphere of the program of study in a school system (Robinson, 2015).

Dance: The brain and body working in concert to create, perform, connect, and respond to movement challenges (Minton & Faber, 2016; National Core Arts Standards, 2014).

Dance class: A 45-minute period in a large space focused on warming up, concept exploration, skill development, creating a dance, and cooling down (Gilbert, 2006; Spratt, 2016).

Dance Education: Communicating the human experience through movement and including analysis, observation, improvisation, technique, choreography, and performance. To further dance education, exposure to movement theories, culture, history, and anatomy increase the impact of the experience (National Dance Education Organization, 2017).

Life-world: The individual's world of immediate experience (Husserl, 1913; Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

Notators: People who record dance in written form including Labanotation, Motif Notation, and Language of Dance (Guest, 1984).

Sphere of ownness: An active experience wherein the dancer creates embodies, and shares in the process of dance making (Franck, 2014; Husserl, 1913).

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

This study makes the following assumptions. First and foremost, the responses of the elementary students are assumed to be honest and representative of their opinions, ideas, and experiences. Interviews, anecdotal notes, videos, and artwork will provide the measures in this phenomenological study (Assaf, 2013; Bloom, 1954; Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Nielsen, 2012; Nielsen & Burridge, 2015). These methods allow the voices of the students to be heard to discover their experiences and reflections about the cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic processes during the dance classes.

This phenomenological study utilized interviews in order to enable the elementary school-aged participants to share their opinions and ideas of the before-school dance classes. All participants were enrolled in the school study site, and as such, the scope of the study is limited to the students at this single school. The students participated on a volunteer basis, with a total of 20 students participating in the dance classes. Half of the participants were subsequently interviewed, and video recorded, with two alternate students selected if one of the interviewees was unable to complete the study. These alternates were not needed.

Piaget and Inhelder (1969) discussed a static quality of students in the preoperational stages, so to gather dynamic responses reflective of kinetic and transformational images, elementary students in Piaget's concrete operational stage were participants in this study. When students reach middle and high school dance classes,

specific genres of dance are taught rather than dance integration lessons, so elementary school students were the focus for this study.

I selected a phenomenological research approach, so the experiences and reflections of the elementary students will highlight the study. This may limit the depth of the research since I will only conduct interviews with 10 students. I will not observe other dance integration classes, but only concern myself with the phenomenon of the lived experience of dance classes in a single elementary school. The responses of the interviews will not be analyzed systematically to form a theory as in grounded research theory (Creswell, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Since a case study does not involve a description of consciousness or an awareness of the lived experience (Husserl, 1913; van Manen, 1990), the focus of this study will remain phenomenological.

I focused on the student opinions and ideas from the before-school dance classes to emphasize their voices (Giguere, 2015; Leonard, 2014; Maynard, Solis, Miller, & Brendel, 2017). Establishing a relationship with and understanding the students can glean more depth of information from the students. Data collection for the study included anecdotal notes of the performances, videos, student artwork, and one-on-one interviews.

The researcher's personal biases with regards to dance education programs and curriculum development focusing on dance as an art form were a limitation of the study. Over the past 30 years, I have worked as a dance educator in preschools as well as 12 public and private schools and universities. I also developed and wrote curriculum for multiple levels of dance programs. I bracketed my feelings regarding the phenomenon of

dance classes and focused on the opinions and ideas of the students to formulate the results (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; van Manen, 1990).

This study represents the opinions and ideas of students in one suburban public elementary school in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The dance education program has been in place for seven years, so the results cannot be used for all elementary schools. The gender, age, and years of experience of the students interviewed in the study impacted their responses regarding dance as an art form and a course of study in the elementary school curriculum (Minton & Faber, 2016; Leonard, Hellenbrand, & McShane-Hellenbrand, 2014).

To assist the elementary students in the one-on-one interview process, videos of the individual end of class performance were used for the stimulated recall method to heighten the consciousness of the lived experience (Bloom, 1954; Guskey, 2012; Messmer, 2015; Stough, 2001) and students made artwork about the dance classes to accompany their verbal responses (Nielsen & Burridge, 2015). The interview questions were open-ended to allow for individualized responses representing the opinions and ideas of each student.

Summary

This study represents a qualitative analysis of elementary school students who participated in a before-school dance program to analyze their thoughts, feelings, and experiences that occur while dancing. Previous studies (e.g., Minton & Faber, 2016) highlight the fact that dance class increases communication skills in children and fosters cognitive development in elementary-aged children. While the current literature fails to

directly examine the phenomenological experiences of students who participate in dance classes, this study describes the experiences and reflections of elementary students participating in before-school dance classes in a public elementary school.

The current chapter provided an overview of this phenomenological study through a brief overview of the relevant research literature. The chapter identified the contextual and theoretical background and described the limitations, assumptions, and delimitations. Previous research has described the mind-body connection in children that can be made through a focus on dance classes (Robinson, 2015; Sheets-Johnstone, 2015b), but no study directly assesses the lived experiences of these children. This study seeks to fill this gap, and assess what these students are thinking, feeling, and experiencing during their time in the classes.

Chapter 2 will include a full discussion of the literature that is relevant to the topic of this dissertation and will highlight the complete conceptual framework being utilized in this study, as well as an examination of the peer-reviewed literature, including background information about dance. These initial introductory sections seek to provide information to guide this qualitative study exploring the cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic processes of elementary students in before-school dance classes.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This study seeks to examine the lived experiences that elementary school students have and describe while participating in a before-school dance class. While previous research creates a strong conceptual framework that seeks to describe the effects of dance classes on students (e.g., Minton & Faber, 2016; Robinson, 2015; Sheets-Johnstone, 2015b), there is a deficiency of knowledge and literature that acknowledges exactly what the individual who is participating in the dance class is thinking, feeling, and experiencing during the act itself. This phenomenological study will contribute to the literature through the direct, focused assessment of 20 elementary school aged individuals as they describe their lived experiences centering on their time in before-school dance classes.

Dance reflects six basic elements: movements, relationships, body, energy, space, and time. These specific elements are not limited to individuals who professionally study dance but, instead, contribute to creating the full human experience (Gilbert, 2006; Hanna, 2015; Sheets-Johnstone, 2011; Spratt, 2016). These dance elements may be correlated to the lifeworld existentials, and consist of multiple factors: spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality (Husserl, 1913; Sheets-Johnstone, 2015a). Describing how these elements of dance not only connect to the real world, but also affect the opinions and ideas of students in their lived experience of dance classes frame the current study. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the cognitive, kinesthetic, and creative experiences and reflections of elementary students in

before-school dance classes. It seeks to close the gap in the literature that currently fails to understand the lived experiences of dancers who participate in a dance class and will assist future educators and dancers with a richer context for the experiences of a dance class.

Within the literature review, three distinct categories will be discussed: the experiences and reflections of dance (Barr, 2015; Eisner, 1994; Giguere, 2011; Klasson, 2014; Matthews, Ubbes, & Freysinger, 2016; Nielsen, 2012; van Manen, 1990; Snook & Buck, 2014; Tsouvala & Magos, 2016); the educational applications with an emphasis on elementary aged students (Burridge, 2010; Gilsdorf & Aldis, 2014; Hanna, 2015; Harbonnier-Topin, 2012; Kranicke & Pruitt, 2012; Leonard, 2014; Leonard, Hellenbrand, & McShane-Hellenbrand, 2014; Piaget, 1947; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969); and the kinesthetic connections between dance and other disciplines (Andre, Durksen, & Volman, 2017; Assaf, 2013; Cicchelli, 2011; Ehrenberg, 2015; Reason & Reynolds, 2010; Zorc, 2017). These studies will assist in creating a conceptual framework for this study and will allow the identification of phenomenological research. In this study, the students explored their cognitive, kinesthetic, and creative experiences within and reflections concerning dance classes.

Conceptual Framework

Dance communicates unique non-verbal messages using six basic elements: movements, relationships, body, energy, space, and time (Hanna, 2015; Spratt, 2016). Choreographers and dancers combine these six elements to produce performances, which affect both the individuals who are physically involved in the dance, and the audience

who then observes it. Each dance experience is different for each individual involved, whether he or she is participating as the dancer, the choreographer, or the audience member (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015b). During the lived experience of the dance, the choreographer envisions how the elements will fit together, then creates the dance, the performer performs the prescribed dance, and the audience observes the presentation (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b). What the dancer and choreographer experience cognitively and kinesthetically, the audience experiences affectively (Minton & Faber, 2016; Sheets-Johnstone, 2015b). Though physical senses are utilized within each of these three roles, the human body cannot fully sense the meaning of the experience without reflection.

These dance elements have utilized a variety of the phenomenological theories of Husserl (1931, 1913) and Sheets-Johnstone (2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b) as well as the cognitive development theories of Piaget (1947, 1962). Husserl's (1913, 1931) theory of phenomenology guides the conceptual framework of this study. Specific applications of the phenomenology of dance are derived from the work of contemporary theorist Sheets-Johnstone (2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b). Next, Piaget's (1947, 1962) theories of child development and intelligence further the analysis, allowing for a specific focus on describing how the sensorimotor and the cognitive systems collaborate in a child's learning. Further studies completed by Piaget and his colleague Inhelder (1969) are also included within this review of literature. Husserl (1913, 1931), Sheets-Johnstone (2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b), and Piaget (1947, 1962) are the main theorists who guide the study to describe the phenomenon of before-school dance classes.

Inspired by Brentano, an experimental psychologist who focused on intentionality, Husserl (1931) developed this science of experience, which he called phenomenology. Husserl continued to develop his ideas and started to attract students of his own who wanted to study this science of description. As Husserl continued his studies, he did not want to limit his work to mere descriptions of consciousness. Instead, he sought to use rich description to describe, examine, and analyze the lived experiences of his participants. Husserl considered this new science of phenomenology to be a study of essences and described a contrast in how participants view the now of the experience from how they view the before and the after of that same experience. In the reflection of the after, the experience becomes concrete with the reflexive modifications.

Husserl (1931) further defined the lived experience as pure description and divided lived experience into two categories including the perception of reality followed by the imagination or memory of that same reality. The perception of reality includes the original perception experienced by the individual in the moment it occurs. In contrast, the second category is a mental and emotional representation of the original memory. The second category represents a change from the original experience and ends with a modified perception of the experience. Husserl describes the perception as an active experience, and associates this with what he describes as the *sphere of ownness*. Within this *sphere of ownness* exists a connection between the body in the lived experience, the physical and mental awareness of that body, and the kinesthetic response that becomes associated with the tactile experiences of that same body. Husserl's sphere of ownness is what the dancer uses to create, embody, and share the resulting lived experience.

The sphere of ownness is how Husserl described the connection between the awareness and experiences of the body. Husserl (1913) further defined experience into three sequential categories beginning with *I move*, followed by *I do,* and *I can*. The *I move* category connected to the reactive tendencies as well as the immediate kinesthetic responses of the individual. The fundamental human concepts unfold through the movement. These concepts then become further articulated through the tactile-kinesthetic body, reflected in the *I do* category. This phenomenology of kinesthetic learning then progressed to the *I can* category and later resulted in the opening of a multitude of cognitive abilities and possibilities. Husserl's ideas of embodiment pertain to animate organisms doing movements that are co-articulated with perceptions. The movements, coupled with the perceptions, connect to the foundational experiences with specific attention to learning and retaining the kinesthetic memory established in the different experiences.

Through Husserl's (1913, 1931) rich description, to his conceptualization of the *sphere of ownness*, and finally to the kinesthetic learning progressions, several elements of dance emerge. With these elements of dance, different movements and relationships to the body interact with various energies, spatial structures, and rhythms that develop throughout the lived experience. The 1960's saw the connection of another theorist, Sheets-Johnstone, who expanded on Husserl's ideas and applied them directly to dance.

Sheets-Johnstone incorporates Husserl's theories into the physical applications of dance. To date, Sheets-Johnstone has published nine books, and has articles in over 70 arts, humanities, and science peer-reviewed journals. In each exploration of movement,

Sheets-Johnstone (2015b) describes the relationship of the dancer to the dance, and further analyzes how this relationship changes with each performance for all involved, including the dancers, choreographers, and audience. Sheets-Johnstone defines dance as more than mere consciousness; rather, dance is the embodiment of new and different information as experienced in time and space by each participant's solution (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015a). This process evolves from the real-time experience of dance to a later reflection of that same experience.

According to Sheets-Johnstone (2015b), dance is created through each exploration of movement. The dancer and the dance exist in a relationship that is pre-reflective during the creating stage and creates the lived experience through the common spatiality and temporality in the action of dancing. Each time a specific dance is performed, the lived experience changes depending on the dancers, the choreographers, and the audience, as the dance embodies a new and different experience for all the people involved. Dance goes beyond mere consciousness with the body and creates its own explicit awareness of movement in and through space. Dance continues as a lived experience based on the daily quest of each dancer's solution to the moment-by-moment perception of his or her body in action, as well as later cognitive reflections of that movement.

The solutions to these moment-by-moment perceptions evolve through the reflective processes that are inherent in the lived experience and are consistent with the phenomenology of embodiment as suggested by Husserl (1913). Amidst the solutions, the dancer, choreographer, and audience form a pattern of discovery through the analysis

of the specific movements in question (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015b). The information that each individual receives through the dance itself is a discrete lived experience with both proprioceptive and kinesthetic connections. What the dancer and choreographer experience cognitively, the audience experiences affectively. Each individual participant forms a different mental representation of the experience. As this process continues, the essence of the phenomenon shows through in the replication of the movements. Throughout the course of this practice, the phenomenology of dance as a lived experience is evident.

Sheets-Johnstone (2015a) further defined the nature of movement as qualitative, and as such, incorporates dynamics in space, time, and force. In an investigation of experiences, the dancer embodies the elements of space, time, and force, while the audience has a visual dynamic of these same elements. The experiences of both the audience and dancer are physically connected to the world that surrounds them. These perceptions are represented in the brain and impact kinesthetic awareness, the maintenance of the kinesthetic memory, and the proprioceptive sense. Sheets-Johnstone (2011, 2015a) describes *qualitative dynamics* as efficient and effective synergies of meaningful movement. The meaning develops from the process of the dance, beginning with feeling the movement and perceiving the movement. This then leads to cognitive awareness, which then further develops into cognitive knowledge. Finally, this knowledge leads to skill development, which eventually grows into specific skilled abilities.

In addition to the phenomenological focus of Husserl and Sheets-Johnstone, Piaget focused specifically on children's cognitive development. Piaget studied philosophy, and these questions of thinking and knowing dominated his lifelong research goals (Singer & Revenson, 1996). While working at the Alfred Binet Laboratory School in Paris, Piaget noticed the consistently incorrect answers of students of various ages and questioned the processes the students followed in their responses. Piaget published papers on this process and, eventually, Dr. Edouard Clarapède, the director of a research institute in Geneva, noticed his work. With this recognition, Piaget began his 60-year career in research on children's thought. Initially, Piaget observed children in natural settings, such as the playground or the classroom. From these observations, Piaget described what the children did, and then formed conclusions regarding the children's thoughts. Piaget believed that learning was achieved by actively engaging in the environment.

In Piaget's (1947) theory of cognitive development, the first two years of life include the sensorimotor stage. During the sensorimotor stage, children develop cognitive structures that assist in increasing their perceptions and intelligence as they grow. Piaget defines intelligence as a state of equilibrium and acknowledges that this balance occurs when sensorimotor and cognitive skills collaborate and interact with the environment. In this search for equilibrium, Piaget and Inhelder (1969) acknowledge four elements to guide children's development: maturation, emotions, social interaction, and experience. From the action of the sensorimotor stage (birth to age two), to the logical perceptions of the preoperational stage (ages two to seven), to the concrete

operational stage (ages seven to 11), Piaget and Inhelder focus on the qualitative nature of children and describe how the children functioned in their natural environment. The elements of development do not exist in isolation but coordinate in unique ways for each individual.

As the child continues to explore his or her different systems and environments, he or she begins to understand that causality exists among these systems. Sometimes, the tactile-kinesthetic reaction depends upon the child's visual perception. This reaction corresponds to the sensorimotor and perceptual schemas that already exist in the child's consciousness and are subsequently divided into three successive forms: rhythm structures, regulations, and reversibility. Rhythm structures include the global and spontaneous movements of the individual and begin to develop first. The regulations act to differentiate between the various schemas that the child already recruits in practice. Finally, reversibility begins to develop following both the rhythm structures and regulations but will not be fully completed until later in the child's cognitive development (Piaget, 1947).

As the child progresses through Piaget's developmental stages, the concrete operational stage represents coordination of certain actions (Piaget and Inhelder, 1969). Concrete operations are a transition between schemes of action and their respective coordinating structures. Some of the elements included in Piaget's concrete operational stage are mirrored in the elements of dance (Gilbert, 2006; Spratt, 2016; Sheets-Johnstone, 2011) and include seriation, classification, number, space, time, and speed (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969).

Utilizing this conceptual framework, I provide information about the phenomenological theory of Husserl (1931, 1913) as it pertains to the description of the lived experience within the *sphere of ownness*. Sheets-Johnstone (2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b, 2011) expands on Husserl's (1931, 1913) phenomenological theory to support the description of the lived experience with specific attention to the actions of dancing and observing movement. Husserl (1931, 1913) and Sheets-Johnstone (2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b) analyzed the phenomenology of the lived experience by connecting the visual, cognitive, and kinesthetic fields and further describing the learning process in dance as qualitative dynamics. Piaget (1947) and Piaget and Inhelder (1969) focused on the actions throughout childhood and how the sensorimotor actions connect to the cognitive actions.

The following background information and peer reviewed literature support elements of the phenomenological work of Husserl and Sheets-Johnstone and the cognitive development work of Piaget (1947), as well as Piaget and his colleague Inhelder (1969). These theories serve as the basis for framing this qualitative study, which explores the experiences and reflections of elementary students in dance classes. These theories describe the elements of dance as a part of the overall cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic experiences and reflections of students in dance class and form a strong rationale for understanding the theoretical context of this study.

Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature Search Strategy

To fully explore the research literature related to dance education and student experiences of dance classes in elementary schools, initial keyword searches guided my

retrieval of primary source, peer-reviewed articles. These articles were located through the databases from Concordia University's George R. White Library & Learning Center. The main search term *dance* was used for the initial search and was later searched for in conjunction with the following terms: *phenomenology, education, pedagogy, lived experience, Husserl, qualitative, children, learning, audience response, culture, movement analysis, kinesthetic*, and *interdisciplinary teaching*. Articles from three different databases were found. These databases included Taylor and Francis, ProQuest, and JSTOR online sources. The results of the initial search yielded over 30 different journals through which relevant studies were published. Initially, articles were chosen through reading the titles and abstracts to gain an overview of the study provided. To elicit more resources, I completed additional searches, utilizing other research databases to broaden the results.

By searching the reference lists of the selected peer reviewed articles (e.g., Hanna, 2015; Gilbert, 2006; Sheets-Johnstone 2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b; Stinson, 2015), more authors and search topics emerged. During the second search of the research databases, 35 additional articles surfaced. Multiple authors occurred repeatedly in the subsequent searches, and included Giguere, Gilbert, Hanna, Sheets-Johnstone, Stinson, and Warburton. To gain access to more sources, I reviewed the reference lists and literature reviews of the articles that had initially been selected and located additional articles this way. Through this review, I was able to analyze the source material of these articles, and from this analysis, derived 30 more articles that were useful to contributing background and context to this study. Various search terms such as *arts integration*,

rhythmic studies, and *reflections* were used. The resources that were selected for inclusion in this study were based on a broad overview of topics, and the finds were then synthesized and categorized through current dance practices that focused on cognition and creativity, lived experience, reflective practice, educational applications, and kinesthetic connections. These studies then guided the organization and synthesis of both the conceptual framework and the literature review.

Experiences and Reflections of Dance

Whether it is the phenomenon of observing dance or participating in a dance class, the reflective process that dancers undergo following their experiences in dance classes offered opportunities for analysis of the themes and commonalities in the dancers' lived experiences (Nielsen & Burridge, 2015; Reinders, Bryden, & Fletcher, 2015; Sheets-Johnstone, 1979, 2014a, 2014b). Through videotapes, journals, homework documents, and one-on-one interviews, Nilges (2004) investigated the meaning of movements in a fifth-grade creative dance class while Reinders and colleagues (2015) used questionnaires, interviews, observations, and field notes to document a single dancers' case study. Both studies reflected Husserl's phenomenological research that focused on lived experience.

Nilges (2004) described and sorted students' intentional movements as they reflected on the meanings of their own dance phrases as well as the dances of their peers. To account for the different structural meanings that were subjective to each individual, Nilges coded the data from the interviews into five different dimensions based on what the students had reflected: expressive, sensory, experiential, competency, and

intersubjective. The student's journals documented unique responses, which also were aligned with the dimensions described in the interviews. These dimensions allowed dance educators to understand their student's processes and cognitions as they arise from the classes.

Andersson's (2014) formative assessments in upper secondary schools, as well as Nielsen's (2012) videographic dance experiences also revealed a variety of responses after students received the same instruction. Throughout the process of Nielsen's (2012) study, the camera was used as a notebook, and considerations had to be made to account for the angle, the proximity, the situations, and the lessons that were contained in each recording. These video notes assisted the researcher in capturing the students in their embodied dance experience and helped the dance educators with their planning and implementation of future curriculum. The goal of Nielsen's (2012) study was to not only capture the final product of the students' dances at the culmination of the unit, but to capture the learning process throughout the academic year as well. This acknowledgement of the learning process was further used to inform future learning and skill development (Nielsen, 2012; Parviainen, 2011).

A second study performed by Nielsen (2015) focused on the embodied experiences of the dancers, as well as the process of problem solving in dance class. Nielsen questioned how students participated in the dance classes with their bodies, as well as how the student's bodily abilities related to his or her overall experiences, both cognitively and emotionally. To assess the learning of the third-grade students that participated in this study, Nielsen completed observational notes, video recorded the

students, instructed students to complete drawings of their dance experience, and finally used the video recordings and the drawings during the interviews as complementary secondary sources. Nielsen's study served as a useful model for this study, where the process and learning of dance was just as important as the final product of the choreographed dance itself.

Harbonnier-Tarpin and Barbier (2012), Bailey and Pickard (2010), and Sheets-Johnstone (2014a, 2014b) all considered the role of skill development within the embodied experiences of the dance students during instruction. The studies of Nielsen (2012, 2015), Paviainen (2011) and Andersson (2014) all worked in conjunction to support Husserl's phenomenological embodiment of the lived experience and the relationship between self and other (Pakes, 2011). These previous studies were all considered together to create a full conceptual framework for this study and could be used as models to inform this study's methodology and procedures.

Several other researchers branched out from the bodily movements concerning dance and sought to connect experiences and reflections of dance to cognitive applications (Cuervo, 2013; Franko, 2011; Ness, 2011; Pakes, 2011; Reinders et al., 2015). Warburton (2011a) further challenged dance scholars to consider the connections between phenomenological and cognitive approaches to dance practice to expand the literature regarding best practices. These connections between cognition and lived experiences were similar to how Husserl (1913, 1931) and Piaget (1947, 1962) built on phenomenology and discovered commonalities across participants through the use of qualitative research.

Though the use of a different perspective, Pakes (2011) focused on both the interaction and reflection of the performers with the audience. The research of Pakes revealed that the awareness of the audience shifts based on the actions of the performers, as well as through additional performance elements such as props, sets, and lighting. Pakes gathered information from Husserl's (1913) phenomenological consideration of experience, with specific attention to the cognitive processes of perceiving, remembering, and imagining. These processes all worked together to understand that both the audience's and the dancer's awareness shifts based on external stimuli throughout the duration of the dance.

Other researchers have focused more directly on the incorporation of lived experiences on dancing. Cuervo (2013) utilized Merleau-Ponty's work as it pertained to consciousness of time and how the body interacts to physical space. Cuervo (2013) also included the same intersubjective discussion from Husserl's work that Nilges (2004) did within the coding for the creative dance unit, allowing space for the lived experience of each of the participants to be reflected within the coding structure. Minton and Faber (2016) then furthered the exploration of the cognitive impact of dance experience, linking it to the lived experiences and subjective analyses of previous scholars. Faber (2016) specifically related the experience of dance education to the motor and neurological development of children in their early childhood years and discussed a call to action for policy makers to support the inclusion of more dance education programming in early childhood curricula. This becomes even more important with the understanding that this type of programming effectively supports brain development and cognitive growth.

Through the elaboration of Husserl's embodiment theme, French phenomenologist Franck (2014) discussed the interaction of the flesh and body utilize in collaboration with the tactile and visual systems. Husserl described the experience of not only the dance, but of movement itself as involving sight and seeing (Franck, 2014). This is due to the integration of the visual system with the rest of the brain and body, as the eyes produce images and activate cognitive processes involved in the perception of the visual phenomena, as well as the kinesthetic movements created by these processes (Macdonald, 2005). Furthermore, Husserl (1913) had previously indicated that the visual and kinesthetic systems were interrelated, something that is acknowledged by current scholars as well. From the eyes, to the head, to the entire body, a continuous consciousness exists throughout the experience of the dance, and further extends to a viewer's perception or awareness of the phenomenon. Husserl (1913) further stated that the visual field allowed an individual to obtain a sense of the world and permitted the individual to encompass a consistent experience through the encompassment of continuity and the allowance of an unfolding consciousness during the physical experience.

These expansions of experience and consciousness directly relate to the point of view of the observer of the dance (Franck, 1981). Following visual field input, cognitive reflection allows the individual to transform the constant element into a creatively projected concept. Husserl (1913) had initially connected sensory impressions to the lived experience of the body. Specifically, he stated that the lived experience cannot appear in the visual field in the same manner it does in the tactile reception. Husserl

distinguished these tactile experiences as evident throughout the body in and through space, and defined specific roles in various perceptual processes, including the visual field.

In addition to the lived experience of choreographing, performing, or observing, dance can also be documented in written form using programs such as Labanotation, Motif writing, or a new hybrid called Motation. Mungee (2015) considered dance as a form of prose, and this specific type of prose-dance utilized a unique symbol system of dance notation. Notators were used to observe the dance as a visual phenomenon, with the goal of recording the choreography through the selected notation system. The notators were efficient at this type of notation and were later used to further the perceptions of the dance-prose. This notation then later established a different lived experience and cognitive connection for all involved: the dancers, the choreographers, and the notators. This notation also broadened the perspectives on the perception of movement as well as how the dancers embody their space.

Sheets-Johnstone (1979, 2014a, 2014b) examined the experience of dance as a visual phenomenon and used this to differentiate between movement of dance defined as art and movement as defined in daily life. Following this differentiation, Ulmer (2015) used the process of writing and notation as a method of choreographic composition. Ulmer's process combined the lived experience of choreography with the cognitive process of writing and was similar to Mungee's (2015). The studies were further connected through the lived experience of dance notation, dance as a visual phenomenon, and the use of dance as choreographic composition in the writing process.

Several authors combined the experiences and reflections of movement with other disciplines including analyses of writing (Richardson, 2013), music (Sievers, Polansky, Casey, & Wheatley, 2013), mathematics (Freitas & Sinclair, 2013), and media (Misirhiralall, 2013). These cross-discipline studies allowed for new, more effective cognitive connections to be examined with relation to dance and the lived experiences thereof. Richardson (2013) reflected on the writing of T.S. Eliot, and how the author's experiences viewing performances of the *Ballets Russes* in the early 1900s influenced his writing in various capacities. The influence of space, place, and community was then connected to more effectively communicate cultural, visual, and auditory phenomena.

Richardson (2013) utilized Eliot's experiences watching the *Ballets Russes* to provide examples of how the author wrote about the universal symbolism inherent in movement, as well as how he also included connections between movement and music. Eliot did not see the different elements of the dance performance in isolation, as others during this time did. Instead, the author connected the individual elements of the dance performance into one coherent movement and described how it provides the foundation for cross-cultural understanding. This is done through a breaking down of boundaries via a non-verbal expression of emotion. Jones (2013) also discussed Eliot's poetry writings and the connections that were made to music and movement. Jones also noted Eliot's repetition and the importance that the author placed on rhythm. Eliot utilized rhythm in his words, just as during a performance, dancers used the rhythm in their bodies, and musicians create rhythms through their instruments and voices.

Sievers and colleagues (2013) discussed the relationship between music and dance as being inclusive of a shared dynamic structure. The disciplines of music and dance include similar elements, such as direction, size, and tempo. With this research, Sievers and colleagues recommended more research must be done in the field, as there was a dearth of knowledge as to how the two fields were connected. Freitas and Sinclair (2013) furthered this inter-disciplinary connection and connected mathematics with movement. Freitas and Sinclair encouraged their readers to reconsider how they conceptualize mathematics, as the articulation and actualization of mathematics should be considered relatively mobile, as a dance performance is considered mobile. By incorporating mathematics with dance, the concepts become animated with movement possibilities.

Misirhiralall (2013) connected the development of dance in the public sphere with specific references to perceptions in the media, and specifically distinguished between dance as functional movement and creative movement. Misirhiralall also referenced the work of Laban, to help acknowledge the importance of a person's body awareness regarding both space and rhythm. Misirhiralall supported dance as an educational practice and described its necessity as a standard in the curriculum experiences of students in public school systems. Finally, Misirhiralall divided her analysis into four themes: education, society, self-development, and religion. In all the themes, Misirhiralall explained dance as a creative art form that should not be limited to select populations. Instead, dance should be offered to all students to improve their overall educational experiences, neurological connections, and emotional growth.

Educational Applications

Dance has many useful educational applications. Through the utilization of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO's) Road Map for Arts Education of 2006, as well as further delineating goals with the Seoul Agenda of 2010, member nations (including the United States) are expected to ensure arts education is accessible, high quality, and contributes to a resolution of challenges in today's global society (Barrick, Kavanaugh, Macfarlane, & Christou, 2012; Snook & Buck, 2014). In fact, UNESCO specifically promotes not only the implementation of art classes themselves (e.g., dance, music, fine arts) but of implementing arts curriculum into the practices of other, non-arts classes (Snook & Buck, 2014). Dance instruction in education has transformed from a curriculum that focuses on specific prescribed movements to a curriculum focusing on creativity and expression (Barrick et al., 2012). Several curricular examples of this recent shift in the literature have been described in the recent literature (e.g., Kranicke and Pruitt, 2012; Matthews, Ubbes, & Freysinger 2016; Valverde & Cochrane 2013), and it has been shown through this literature that an accessible, equitable arts education curriculum allows for children to grow cognitively and emotionally.

Matthews and colleagues (2016) examined rhythm as a lived experience for elementary students from three different perspectives. These perspectives included how teachers defined rhythm, how teachers incorporated rhythm in their specific teaching pedagogy, and what challenges arose from this style of teaching as the teachers included rhythmic activities in the classroom. The teachers in the study were utilized to assist in

the understanding of the role of rhythm as a pattern, a feeling, a variation, and a reward, as well as the contribution of rhythm to overall academic achievement amongst the students. Findings of the study indicated that rhythm impacts all learning and should be seriously considered in interdisciplinary curriculum design. This not only corresponds with UNESCO's call to action in arts curriculum, but also allows teachers and students to develop the cognitive connections necessary to succeed today (Snook & Buck 2014).

Valverde and Cochrane (2013) developed a technique for dancing in an augmented reality that utilized technology infused with choreography and visual art. Dance-based improvisational activities that were used in the study to generate choreography included elements of openness, witnessing, and perceiving. After generating the choreographic material, the dances were then digitized, and became visual art that could be manipulated in a participatory performance environment. This study invited collaboration between dancer, choreographer, and audience, and acknowledged the various transdisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning. Although some may consider this shift in dance education a recent trend, Seidel's (2016) later research focused more directly on the art and legacy of early 20th century modern dancer Isadora Duncan. This research discussed how Duncan's educational process focused on creativity and the whole child. Duncan's idea was to cultivate a physical consciousness in her students by allowing the dancers freedom in their own creative process and did not just limit dance and arts education to arts classes. Seidel's work allows for connections to the conceptual foundation of Husserl (1913, 1931), Sheets-Johnstone (2011), and van Manen (1990).

Dancers and dance educators are continually activating the imagination in the process of teaching and learning (Burridge, 2010; Giguere, 2011; Minetola, Serr, & Nelson, 2012; Sansom, Burridge, & Giguere, 2009; Tsouvala & Magos, 2016). By activating the imagination, dancers have a greater awareness of the specifics of what they are learning as well as their sensory and proprioceptive processes, allowing for a more whole-body experience of dancing (Burridge, 2010). This process of discussing, exploring, and constructing dance enables dance students to access their creativity, communicate about their world, and engage in dance as not only a form of non-verbal expression but dance as a cultural and social phenomenon (Sansom et al., 2009). This allows dance education students to not only become proficient dancers, but also allows these individuals to create more salient cognitive and emotional connections to people of other cultures.

Throughout this teaching and learning process, Tsouvala and Magos (2016) examined how dance students learned to apply their knowledge of the self, and how it connected to the environment through dance class. Beginning with individual movement exploration and then developing this movement into a group dance throughout the students' town, the educational application of Tsouvala and Magos' (2016) study used the community and surrounding culture to impact the dance experience. Freire (2008) further discussed how dancing impacted culture and allowed people to speak a common language: the language of movement. From conversations to concert performances, Freire (2008) described the utilization of dancing as a journey through time and space that offered the possibility for the dancer to become one with others.

Giguere (2011) then examined how the creative process of dancing connects with children's cognition and acknowledged that the more a group of dancers worked together to create a dance, the more cognition was present during the performance of the dance. Koch, Fuchs, and Summa (2014) examined the influence of bodily memory on the dancer's movement qualities, affect, and cognition with elementary aged students, with lighter movement becoming related to more positive memory recall. Klasson (2014) evaluated a motivational interview (MI) technique to assess clients of Dance/Movement therapists, and consisted of four themes including specific communication skills, somatic awareness, parallels, and self-efficacy. Klasson's results indicated a positive relationship between verbal and non-verbal skills during dance/movement therapy sessions, with verbal skills increasing as the dance/movement therapy sessions progressed.

Going beyond the traditional geometric learning, Minetola and colleagues (2012) used dance to explore abstract geometry with first and second graders. Through outdoor activities, the children's tactile, visual, and kinesthetic learning styles were activated. With the addition of the outdoor learning, Minetola and colleagues concluded that students shared more geometric information and demonstrated a greater level of comprehension when compared to previous, more typical assessments. Hanscom (2016) also advocated for unrestricted outdoor play to enhance the overall well-being of children, as these physical experiences help to develop the cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic abilities of children. By incorporating a variety of teaching and learning processes that focus on creativity, communication, and culture, the lived experiences of students are challenged in different ways than what would typically be present within the

traditional learning setting. The addition of dance education into other academic classes allows for non-traditional learners to be able to achieve greater success and learning connections in the classroom.

For Hanna (2015), the lived experience of dance included cognitive, proprioceptive, kinesthetic, and sensory elements. When dancing or observing a dance, the brain and physical experiences of the body must collaborate. As the dancer dances, the brain undergoes a multitude of plasticity changes: neurons generate, pathways connect, and networks process, allowing for cognitive connections to be developed during the practice and execution of the performance. Due to the role of mirror neurons, visual stimulation provides lived experiences of human movement to a non-moving individual, so audience members may experience similar kinesthetic experiences of the observed actions. In addition, Hanna discussed the non-verbal experience of dance and compared it to verbal language production. The verbal and non-verbal languages work in tandem to connect body and mind to cultural, historical, and environmental contexts. The non-verbal language of dance is predominately motor, visual, and kinesthetic, whereas verbal language is auditory and vocal. Both verbal and non-verbal communications incorporate the sensorimotor system and include cognitive processing to assist with language facilitation. Hanna (2015) described the lived experiences of dancing and watching others dance as interactive, with verbal, non-verbal, and external systems impacting the overall experience.

The brain and body work together through sensory and motor activities and continue to develop throughout the life span (Gilbert, 2006). According to Nielsen and

Burridge (2015), movement and cognition cannot be separated, and in fact, work together to allow for fuller cognitive connections. In the learning process, the first experience is sensory, and is followed by cognitive and emotional reflections and connections based on multiple factors, including the different lived experiences, how the brain processes the information, and the people involved in the experience (Gilbert, 2006). These cognitions help individuals to build the efficiency of the sensorimotor brain and raises awareness for a fully functioning body to integrate with a fully functioning brain. To assist with the development cognitive skills, Gilbert suggests that there are four different opportunities for brain growth: cell explosion (conception to birth), synaptic connections (birth to age three), dendrite expansion (four to 12), and brain plasticity (12 to adult). Gilbert's brain-compatible model coincides well with the developmental stages of Piaget (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969), as dancers of different ages engage in different neurological and sensorimotor processes, and further supports meaningful experiences in an enriched, customized environment, where learners receive feedback, interact, and have novel as well as repetitive practice.

Collaboration between classroom educators and dance educators has highlighted the dance learning and application of the curriculum in a variety of classroom contexts (Andrade, Lui, Palma, & Hefferen, 2015; Barr, 2015; Becker, 2013; Dragon, 2014; Faber, 2016; Logsdon, 2013; Snook & Buck, 2014). By pairing classroom teachers with dance educators, the students in these classes receive multidisciplinary instruction, assisting in memory recall and cognitive processing. Snook and Buck (2014) incorporated this type of program to provide regularly scheduled dance education to students in New Zealand

primary classrooms and saw that an arts education allowed students to fulfill their learning potential in other, more nuanced ways than typical classroom education did. Dragon's (2014) collaborative work focused on the pedagogical practices aligning with student-centered learning and connected educational history to the dance classroom and created a curriculum exploring the culture of teaching and learning within the realm of dance as an art form. Dragon's (2014) work showcased the fact that students who are exposed to dance education pedagogy are more likely to become active learners and become more well-rounded students.

Work from both Andrade and colleagues (2015) and Becker's (2013) studies integrated dance learning throughout the school day and developed assessments to showcase the progress of their students. In some studies (Andrade et al., 2015), students who were provided with feedback felt as though they had access to actionable next steps and had the agency to make changes in their educational careers. In Becker's (2013) study, students felt as though dance education allowed them more long-term benefits than just participating in a dance class, and made them better, more productive students. Similarly, Faber (2016) advocated for the need to include more early childhood dance programs throughout the United States, so that students could develop motor and creative learning through a multidisciplinary approach. Alternatively, Logsdon (2013) focused on developing artistic literacy through inquiry-based opportunities, which promoted more rigorous curriculum and built creative and innovative students. Logsdon also valued modeling the collaborative process for students, as this enables opportunities for growth not only within the discipline of dance, but in other academic disciplines as well. This

was specifically valued due to studies that demonstrated that a childhood dance education may help to reduce workplace stress later in life.

Kinesthetic Connections

According to Gallas (1994) and Davis (2008), dance education courses embedded in the elementary school curriculum encourage cognitive processing, problem solving behaviors, and creativity. These dance programs can also be used to facilitate communication with people from other cultures. Specifically, Cicchelli (2011) acknowledged that while people may have different circumstances and subjective experiences, everyone desires to be known, recognized, and connected to others. This may be achieved through dance, and Cicchelli's study highlights the relationship building that begins with utilizing dance as a lived experience. These moments are not isolated. People across the globe may experience dance as a community, joining together to share common interests and emotions (Cicchelli, 2011).

The art of dance expresses emotions non-verbally (Burger, Saarikallio, Luck, Thompson, & Toiviainen, 2013; Van Dyck, Maes, Hargreaves, Lesaffre, & Leman, 2013), which affectively creates a link between the brain and body. Numerous researchers have explored this kinesthetic and cognitive connection from the point of view of the performer, the choreographer, and the audience (Assaf, 2013; Botha, 2015; Okonski, 2016; Reason & Reynolds, 2010; Romita & Romita, 2016; Tagliabue & McIntyre, 2013). Ehrenberg's (2015) study incorporates a kinesthetic mode of attention directing dancers to perceptions and awareness of the different ways their bodies move. Focusing on these kinesthetic experiences, all the dancers must be pre-reflective of both

themselves and the environment. Contemporary dancers describe this mode of attention using the following verbs: *navigate, problem solve, experiment, explore, enmesh,* and *attune*.

Similar to Ehrenberg's (2015) study, Romita and Romita (2016) incorporate a kinesthetic awareness of anatomy for the dancer. Using this kinesthetic awareness, dancers can move with a heightened attention and take better care of their bodies throughout a lifetime of dance. Tagliabue and McIntyre (2013) further demonstrated that the reconstruction of dance movements happens in the brain when individuals recall or visualize the kinesthetic task of dancing. These movement experiences subsequently serve to connect the visual to the kinesthetic and support the work of Piaget and Inhelder (1969).

Building off this research that focuses solely on the brain-body connection of dance, other researchers have sought to describe the relationships between music, movement, and emotions. Van Dyck et al. (2013) focused only on emotions and the contrast between *happy* and *sad* emotions with respect to movement and music, while Burger and colleagues (2013) discussed the specific relationship between music and movement. Certain movements were analyzed, as were the emotions that were connected to those movements when certain music was played. This revealed the interactions of the brain, the body, and the environment as well as Piaget's (1947) sensorimotor capabilities.

Reason and Reynolds (2010) examined the kinesthetic empathy of the audience during a dance performance. Even though the audience has a visual experience while watching the dance, mentally responding to the seen movement invokes articulations of a

kinesthetic experience via mirror neurons. In Assaf's (2013) interactive exploration, communication in a global sense was used to evaluate connections between the audience and performer from a kinesthetic perspective. Assaf (2013) further discussed the case for education to include physical movement to foster communication. To complete this exploration, Assaf (2013) focused on three areas: embodied knowledge, embodied communication, and the interaction of the audience and performer. The embodied knowledge supported different ways of knowing, as well as the lived experience as explained by Husserl (1931), while the embodied communication reflects numerous levels. These levels included: the transmission of movement ideas from the choreographer to the dancers, the lived experience of the performer after embodying the movements, and the kinesthetic empathy of the audience after receiving the information from the performance. The interaction of audience and performer extends to sensory reactions, perceptions, and associations.

Assaf (2013) discussed a preunderstanding of the phenomenon of the lived experience that each audience member brings to the performance in a different capacity. This preunderstanding contributes to an evaluation process that each audience member partakes in, and links directly to specific observations and interpretations of the performance. This process reflects Husserl's (1931) interdisciplinary approach to lived experience. Through this interactive choreographic project, Assaf (2013) sought to use the body as a kinesthetic communication device and involved the audience in both the observations and analyses of the performance from an active, rather than the historically utilized passive perspective. Through the responses of several audience members, the

interactive situation created also fostered a sense of unity between the audience and performers. The body and the mind of each individual present worked in concert with the environment, and the concepts of identity, recognition, and feelings became connected to the audience and performers.

Several other interactive studies focused on additional stimuli coupled with movement. Van Dyck and colleagues (2013) explored how the bass drum and its variance impacts the movement of the human body. This study analyzed the coordinated rhythmic movement of people. Further analysis of the interactions among the auditory, motor, and vestibular systems revealed a constant connection among individuals through these systems. Di Carlo (2014) utilized this previous work and further included architecture and objects as choreographic elements in exhibition spaces. The use of movement within these site-specific elements influenced the rhythm, dimension, space, and time of the performance.

Summary and Conclusions

This study seeks to examine the lived experiences of elementary-school aged students as they participate in dance classes. The study is qualitative, and relies on both the conceptual framework, as well as the array of peer-reviewed literature available on the topic at hand. Conceptually, the works of Husserl (1931, 1913) and Sheets-Johnstone (2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b), as well as the cognitive applications of Piaget (1947) and Piaget and Inhelder (1969) are used as the basis of the theoretical foundation to this study.

This chapter attempted to fully examine the current state of the literature on the topic of dance research. Specifically, multiple qualitative examples of dance research, dance education studies in the elementary setting, and audience/performer interactions were described. Previous studies agree that dance is more than just a physical act– instead, it is a culmination of a mind-body experience that affects not just the dancer themselves, but the audience and choreographer. Individuals across the world use dance not just for exercise, but to express themselves, reflect on lived experiences, and connect with others.

The peer-reviewed literature provided support for pursuing a qualitative research study to describe the cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic experiences and reflections of elementary students in before-school dance classes. Dance classes do not just focus on the student's bodies and kinesthetic learning – instead, they allow increased verbal and non-verbal communication skills, and assist in bolstering the cognitive processes of the students who participate in them. While this much is known about dance classes, the phenomenological research that centers on the student's actual lived experiences has yet to be explored.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Dance illustrates the human experience by connecting the elements of the lifeworld with other disciplines. Previous literature (e.g., Assaf, 2013; Botha, 2015; Okonski, 2016; Reason & Reynolds, 2010; Romita & Romita, 2016; Tagliabue & McIntyre, 2013) provided support for this study by showcasing the fact that dance is not only a physical sport. Instead, dance classes allow students to benefit from increased verbal and non-verbal communication skills as well as assisting in developing cognitive processes of the students who participate in them. While these aspects have been previously acknowledged, phenomenological research that centers on student's actual lived experiences has yet to be explored. This study aimed to help fill this gap in the research literature and examined exactly what students in dance classes are thinking, feeling, experiencing, and perceiving.

Dance education is a rarity in most school systems as well as a low priority in the elementary school curriculum (Robinson, 2015), though it has been shown by previous research to be incredibly useful to a student's mental and physical development. In dance classes, students have opportunities for collaboration, communication, critical analysis, and creative problem solving in a kinesthetic focused environment (Robinson, 2015; Minton & Faber, 2016; Gilbert, 2006). Throughout this study, I explored the elements of dance though a series of lessons designed to elicit descriptions of the cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic experiences of elementary students who participated in these lessons. Observations, video recordings, anecdotal notes, student artwork, and interviews

provided data for this phenomenological study. I taught elementary students dance lessons that were reflective of the National Core Arts Standards (2014) to elicit experiences and reflections from the selected elementary students. The results from this study may provide insight into the experiences and reflections of elementary students in dance classes.

The present chapter presents the phenomenon to be explored, the parameters of the research design, and the rationale for the study. My role, as well as the methodology will also be discussed. Specific methodology, including participant selection, procedures, instrumentation, the data analysis plan, and trustworthiness, will be detailed in the respective sections of this chapter.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were:

1. What are the experiences of elementary students regarding assimilation of the elements of dance after participation in before-school dance classes?

2. What are the reflections of elementary students about the cognitive, kinesthetic, and creative processes after participation in before-school dance classes?

Purpose and Design of the Proposed Study

I selected a phenomenological approach to focus on describing the cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic experiences and reflections of elementary students participating in before-school dance classes. Phenomenology explores knowledge and seeks to discover and describe the meaning of a selected phenomenon experienced by a group of people (Creswell, 2013; Richards & Morse, 2013). Phenomenological research is

enacted to discover the lifeworld of the participants, and what it means to them (Husserl, 1913; Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Phenomenology describes the consciousness of individuals and their unique experience of a phenomenon. Grounded theory was considered as a foundation for the present research. Grounded theory focuses on four important characteristics: fit, understanding, generality, and control. These four characteristics are supported by data and are not specific to a small group of people or a specific situation. Although grounded theory corresponds to real-world data, this research design must fit a set of data, whereas a phenomenological design relies on the unique responses of the individual to their lived experience.

Case study research was also considered as the framework for this study. This type of research design provides details about a specific system. Rather than focusing on the individuals, case studies concentrate on the bounded system. Phenomenology describes the individual experience of consciousness, whereas case studies describe how all the parts come together. I utilized a phenomenological research design for this study because it captures the essence of the individual's unique experience and does not confine the students to a prescribed set of data or a bounded system. Through the involvement in before-school dance classes, selected elementary students explored and discussed their lived experience.

Research Population and Sampling Method

Sampling Method.

The data collection process began with distributing a study packet to third, fourth, and fifth grade students at the public elementary school. The packet included the

consent and assent forms for participation in the study (Appendices C & D). The study packet also included a brief overview of the different dance classes, the interview questions (Appendix E), an explanation of the interview process, the maximum length of the interview, a description of the process for the student artwork, and the reason for video recording performances and interviews. Parents completed the forms within one week and returned them to me at the study site. The parents who gave permission for their student to be in the study also had the option of being one of the 10 students who participated in the one-on-one interview process.

Then, the parents of the 10 interview students completed consent and assent forms for video recording and interviews (Appendices F & G). Twenty total students were recruited for the study. All students participated in the before-school dance class portion of the study, and 10 participated in the interview portion. Two other students were chosen to be alternates and were available in case one of the 10 chose not to participate in the interview. I was available by phone, email, and at school to respond to any additional inquiries, but the inquiry needed to be initiated by the parent or guardian due to the school system IRB Committee policy that states that the researcher may not contact participants via phone or email. The additional consent and assent forms (Appendices F & G) were a requirement of the school system IRB Committee. After the parents and the participants signed the forms, I made copies of the forms. Then, I returned the copies to each participant.

Participant Selection Logic.

The participants in this study demonstrate a purposeful selection of elementary school students at a single school in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. There were 20 total students selected to participate in this study, with two other students chosen as alternates. These alternates were to be used if any participants were unable to complete the classes as well as the interview. These alternates did not participate in the study. All participants completed the dance class, but only 10 participated in the interview process. Third, fourth, and fifth grade students were chosen to participate in the study because they can articulate verbal responses and explain their experiences more readily than their younger peers (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969). To gather dynamic responses reflective of cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic images, elementary students in Piaget's concrete operational stage were participants in this study. Piaget and Inhelder discussed a static quality of students in the preoperational stages, so that is why participants in the concrete operational stage were selected.

Instrumentation

Students participated in before-school dance classes that followed the *Showing Six* template. After participating in these dance classes, students completed artwork (Appendix H) that helped them to facilitate their recall of their dance class experience (Nielsen & Burridge, 2015). This artwork was used in conjunction with open-ended interviews, which were conducted with 10 of the 20 students and were only performed with one student at a time. These interviews were video recorded to assist in transcribing the responses accurately. The interviews lasted no more than 10 minutes and member

checking for accuracy lasted no longer than five minutes (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Alphanumeric codes were used throughout the report to maintain ethical research procedures. The dissemination of the results was provided to the school as a narrative report and included the commonalities discovered in the research as well as any perceived implications for future studies.

I designed and implemented the lesson plans (Appendix I) as well as all the data collection instruments within this study incorporating the National Core Arts Standards (2014) in conjunction with the writing process of Boushey and Moser in *The Daily Five* (2006) as models. The dance class structure that emerged for this study focused on a blend of cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic activities. The first part of the dance class introduced the new vocabulary for the lesson. Then, students explored the new vocabulary kinesthetically, planned how they presented it as a dance phrase, and revised the dance phrase based on suggestions from the teacher and peers. Students then transitioned from independent work to small group collaborative dance phrase development.

Each class connected to the background knowledge of the students and made additional connections to other academic disciplines. After the initial collaborations and connections, students prepared a performance for peer and teacher review, so everyone was a performer and an audience member. At the end of the class session, students discussed their performances, gathered feedback from the researcher, and created artwork concerning the emotions that the dance class made them feel (Nielsen & Burridge, 2015;

Husserl, 1931; Hanna, 2015; Sheets-Johnstone, 2015b, 2011; Minton & Faber, 2016). The lesson plans reflecting this dance class structure are found in Appendix I.

I transcribed and analyzed all the interviews for commonalities in the data (van Manen, 1990). Interview questions were developed for this qualitative study using models concurrent with studies completed by Creswell (2013), van Manen (1990), and Johnson and Christensen (2014). The specific questions were self-designed according to a review of previous studies done with elementary aged children (Andre, Durksen, Volman, 2017; Leonard, 2014; Nilges, 2004). The interview questions were prompted using the videos from the end of class performance and student artwork depicting the dance class experience to stimulate recall (Bloom, 1954; Guskey, 2012; Nielsen & Burridge, 2015; Stough, 2001). The questions focused on the phenomenon of dance classes and the elementary student's cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic experiences and reflections about the dance classes.

Data Collection

Throughout the study, I bracketed my preconceptions and experiences (Creswell, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Richards & Morse, 2013) both as a dance student and a dance educator. This allowed the students to share their cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic experiences and reflections of the phenomenon of before-school dance classes. Students shared their lived experiences without my preconceived notions or biases coloring their responses.

All students received the same instruction for each of the lessons exploring the six elements of dance (Spratt, 2016; Gilbert, 2006). The students discussed their unique

lived experience of the dance class during the one-on-one interviews (Husserl, 1913; Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b; van Manen, 1990). These interviews were completed with one student at a time immediately after each lesson to assist in the recall of the experience (Bloom, 1954; Guskey, 2012; Messmer, 2015; Stough, 2001). This qualitative study utilized anecdotal notes from observations of the end of class performances, video recordings of the performances and interviews, student artwork (Appendix H), and one-on-one interviews to describe the cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic experiences and reflections of elementary students in dance classes.

All third, fourth, and fifth graders received a research study packet. There were 20 students who participated in the before-school dance classes for two weeks. Each class focused on a different element of dance and reflect the *Showing Six* template (Appendix I). Anecdotal notes from the end of class performances were completed throughout the study, and video recordings of the performances were done to facilitate the stimulated recall method during the one-on-one interviews (Bloom, 1954; Guskey, 2012; Messmer, 2015; Stough, 2001) and to assist in writing the anecdotal notes of the performances.

Students completed artwork (Appendix H) to help facilitate recall of their dance class experience (Nielsen & Burridge, 2015). The interviews were video recorded to assist in transcribing the responses accurately. There were 10 students who completed the one-on-one interviews with open-ended questions. The interviews lasted no longer than 10 minutes and member checking lasted no longer than five minutes (Johnson &

Christensen, 2014). The students discussed their artwork during the interviews and described their end of class performance.

Data Analysis Procedure

As the primary researcher, my role in the study included planning and teaching the before-school dance classes (Gilbert, 2006; Spratt, 2016; van Manen, 1990), video recording the performances at the end of the classes for the interview students and conducting the interviews of the 10 students after the dance class experience (Creswell, 2013). The 10-minute interviews occurred immediately after the dance lessons. The video recordings of the end of class performance were shown to each student during the interview to assist the student in the recall of the performance experience (Bloom, 1954; Guskey, 2012; Messmer, 2015; Stough, 2001). Students also created artwork about their dance experience to assist in eliciting their consciousness during the dance class (Nielsen & Burridge, 2015). The interviews were conducted in my office and were video recorded to assist in the transcription and analysis processes.

Anecdotal notes from the end of class performances with the 10 interview students were transcribed from the video recordings. The interviews were completed after each dance class with one or two students per day. Each interview was video recorded and transcribed. Using the responses and the artwork of the students, as well as the anecdotal notes from the performances, I sought commonalities to discover the essence of the lived experience of elementary students in dance classes (Husserl, 1913; Nielsen & Burridge, 2015; Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, 2015b; van Manen, 1990). During the initial analysis of the transcripts, open coding was used to name and categorize

important words and phrases from the interviews (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). After the process of open coding, axial coding was used to separate the important words and phrases into organized categories and recognize the commonalities in the data. Next, the process of selective coding was used to realize the main idea produced from the open and axial coding phases of analysis. The result of the data analysis was then used to describe the cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic experiences and reflections of elementary students in dance classes.

Limitations of the Research Design

While phenomenological research undoubtedly has its strengths, there are inherent limitations found within this research design. Phenomenological research documents the lived experiences of the participants and assists researchers with bolstering the depth of knowledge in a certain subject area, however, it is incredibly difficult to generalize the findings of one sample to other samples (van Manen, 2007). Because the findings of one sample may look different from a similar sample, it is important to understand that the sample itself is one of the general limitations of the study. For example, this study consisted of participants who had all participated in dance education previously. The lived experiences of these participants would look very different if they had never experienced dance education, or if I had surveyed adult dancers instead of dancers under the age of 18. Finally, the fact that the sample was all-female is a limitation, as male dancers may have a different experience of dance education than female dancers do.

Validation

Creswell (2013) and Johnson and Christensen (2014) referred to triangulation as the use of a variety of sources, data, and methods to corroborate the research in the search for the merging of the results. For this phenomenological study, member checking (Johnson & Christensen, 2014), rich, thick description as defined by van Manen (1990), and an external audit by three dance consultants was used for triangulation. The member checking allowed the participants to judge the accuracy and credibility of the interviews. The rich, thick description focused on connecting the details to determine the common themes or essence in the data (van Manen, 1990). Three external dance consultants examined the process and product for accuracy.

One dance consultant is an elementary educator as well as a dance educator. She worked in university dance programs, K−12 dance programs, and currently teaches general education in the elementary classroom. The second dance consultant has a 40-year history as a dance educator and has developed local, national, and international dance programming. She also serves as a dance administrator and is on the board of numerous local, regional, and national dance organizations. The third consultant has served on the faculty of several university Dance Departments and danced professionally. She is an advocate for dance as an academic discipline. Using the multiple sources, data, and consultants to corroborate the research satisfies triangulation.

Johnson and Christensen (2014) define external validity as how the study results can be generalized with treatment variations, times, settings, and populations. In this phenomenological study, the target population included third, fourth, and fifth graders.

These students are an accessible population because they were available to me as the dance educator in the school. The study results cannot be generalized across settings, times, and populations because what occurred in this study is not transferable to all elementary students. This study included only female students in third and fourth grade. Therefore, the study results may change if the population included boys and students of different ages. The results would also be different at any other school because this is one of the few schools where students have had dance instruction since Kindergarten and therefore have background knowledge of the content and process of dance instruction.

Credibility.

Credibility is related to conformability, which relies on the researcher to maintain accurate records of the study throughout the process (Creswell, 2013) assuring the conclusions are those of the study participants. To achieve confirmability in this phenomenological study, I remained conscious of biases and experiences I brought to the research. I also did member checking with the elementary students for verification of the interview transcripts (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). I focused on the cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic experiences and reflections of the participants and conducted validity checks to achieve accurate recording and reporting of the data.

Dependability.

This phenomenological study targeted a select group of elementary students in a suburban public elementary school so conducting the research again will not yield the same results because the experiences and reflections of each individual are unique (van Manen, 1990). Creswell (2013) suggested standards to assess the quality of the

phenomenological research including evidence of a clear phenomenon, procedures of data analysis, communication of the themes extracted from the data, and reflexive action of the researcher throughout the study. The following includes the description of the sample, data collection and analysis, coding procedures, and reporting of the common themes discovered in the data. The interview questions are found in Appendix E and the lesson plans are found in Appendix I.

Validity and Transferability.

Credibility for this phenomenological study was achieved by member checking (Johnson & Christensen, 2014), rich, thick description as defined by van Manen (1990), and an external audit by three dance consultants. Two of the dance consultants mentioned how this research will provide a springboard for future elementary dance programs. Another discussed the evidence of embodiment with the student responses, specifically the thoughts and feelings surrounding the rain drop story. When considering the fun and learning discussed by several students, one dance consultant viewed this as an opportunity for fun in learning. The consultant saw this as another research study exploring the why of fun and learning during dance classes and as further evidence of the need for dance programming specifically at the elementary level.

Confirmability.

To achieve confirmability in this phenomenological study, I was conscious of biases and experiences I brought to the research. I organized and maintained accurate records throughout the fieldwork. I focused on the cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic experiences and reflections of the participants. The coding, analysis, and data reporting

relied solely on the words, actions, and artwork of the participants to alleviate bias and achieve confirmability.

Expected Findings

I expect the participants will have their own rich experiences of participating in dance classes. Through a combination of their interview responses and art, the participants will be able to communicate their lived experiences while participating in dance education. I expect that participants will find their dance classes fun and stimulating, and their interviews and art pieces will help to showcase these findings.

Ethical Issues

Conflict of Interest Assessment.

As both a researcher and dance educator, I understand that I am in a position of authority over my participants. I am also a teacher at the study site and know that I must bracket my expectations, preconceptions, and feelings to avoid any more conflicts of interest (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). This includes my knowledge and experiences regarding dance education as a student and a teacher. Bracketing allows me to encounter the essence of the results with an open mind (Husserl, 1913, 1931; Johnson & Christensen, 2014; van Manen, 1990). However, I have not received any funding from outside sources to carry out this research, and therefore, my financial conflicts of interest are minimal.

Researcher's Position.

I was the individual completing the fieldwork. I am a teacher at the study site, and students in Kindergarten through fourth grade receive dance integration lessons on a

weekly basis. In this study, the focus was on third, fourth, and fifth grade students. I taught before-school dance integration classes incorporating the elements of dance as they relate to the lifeworld existentials (Husserl, 1913; van Manen, 1990).

Ethical Issues in the Proposed Study.

Before beginning the fieldwork, I received approval from the elementary school principal (Appendix A) and the IRB Committee of the school system (Appendix B). The principal supported the study from the beginning of the process. In contrast, the school system IRB Committee required six proposal submissions, numerous phone conversations, many emails, a face-to-face meeting, and five months for approval.

Since the proposed study utilized human subjects, specifically, human subjects under the age of 18, there are some inherent ethical issues that must be discussed. Johnson and Christensen (2014) suggested the following ethical procedures for research with humans: informed consent, freedom to withdraw, protection from mental and physical harm, confidentiality, and anonymity. The students in this study were informed of the expectations and the parents completed an informed consent for their children to participate in the study. They also gave their informed consent for their child to be video recorded. All students completed assent forms for the study and the interview students completed a separate assent form for video recording of the performances and interviews. Students and their parents were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and there were no benefits or risks to participating. Students were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time and were protected from mental and physical harm. Confidentiality and anonymity were achieved through assigning each participant an

alphanumeric code, and they were referred to using this code for the duration of the study. The one-on-one interviews were conducted in a private room to ensure the privacy of the participants. Following transcription, all recordings of participants were destroyed. No compensation was provided to the students or their families before, during, or after the study.

Summary

This phenomenological study describes the cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic experiences and reflections of elementary students in a suburban public elementary school in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. This study is part of research efforts to support the implementation of more elementary dance education programs throughout the United States. Robinson (2015) stated dance education is a low priority in the national curriculum and a rarity in most school systems, even though previous literature (e.g., Assaf, 2013; Botha, 2015; Okonski, 2016; Reason & Reynolds, 2010; Romita & Romita, 2016; Tagliabue & McIntyre, 2013) has shown that dance is not simply a physical sport. Instead, dance classes allow students to benefit from increased verbal and non-verbal communication skills as well as assisting in the development of cognitive processes of the students who participate in them. While these aspects have been previously acknowledged, phenomenological research that centers on student's actual lived experiences has yet to be explored. This study aims to help fill this gap in the research literature and examine exactly what students in dance classes are thinking, feeling, experiencing, and perceiving.

This chapter includes the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, the methodology detailing the participant selection logic, the procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection, the instrumentation, and the data analysis plan. This chapter concludes with an overview of trustworthiness including internal and external validity, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures.

The data collection includes anecdotal notes from dance class performances, video recordings, student artwork of how dance class made them feel, and one-on-one interviews to discover the experiences and reflections of the students during before-school dance classes. Without a dance education, students have fewer opportunities to engage in creative problem solving, critical analysis, communication, and collaboration in an arts enhanced environment (Gilbert, 2006; Minton & Faber, 2016; Nielsen & Burridge, 2015; Robinson, 2015). This study provides educators and administrators descriptions of the commonalities of the cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic experiences and reflections of elementary students in dance classes to inform future decisions about elementary dance programming in school systems.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Introduction

This study sought to explore the experiences and reflections of elementary students in dance classes. In the current administrative and educational climate, dance classes are viewed as a low priority compared with other subjects. While previous studies have shown the efficacy of dance classes to create a mind-body connection and facilitate improved communication skills, no studies to date ask the participants how they think, feel, and mentally experience participating in a dance class.

This study utilized phenomenology to analyze the qualitative responses of the participants. Phenomenology describes the consciousness of individuals and their unique experience of a phenomenon (Husserl, 1913; Johnson & Christensen, 2014; van Manen, 1990), and is done to discover the lifeworld of the participants and what it means to them (Husserl, 1913; Johnson & Christensen, 2014). In this study, the unique lived experiences of the students who participated in before-school classes are analyzed. The elementary students described the experience from the dual perspectives of both a performer and an audience member, a finding that has been previously supported by the research literature (Hanna, 2015; Sheets-Johnstone, 2015b). To further assist in discovering the meaning of the experience, participants also created artwork for each dance class (Nielsen & Burridge, 2015).

Chapter 4 includes a description of the sample population for this study. The chapter continues with an analysis of the data and research results including commonalities discovered in the experiences and reflections of the study participants.

The chapter concludes with evidence of trustworthiness, validity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Description of the Sample

The study was conducted at a suburban, public elementary school in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The school consisted of 525 students, who were all in Kindergarten through fifth grade. The school has limited racial and ethnic diversity, with 73% of the school identifying as Caucasian, 6% identifying as Black/African-American, 3% Latino/of Hispanic origin, and 18% identifying as Asian descent. The school also contains a majority of female students, with these individuals consisting of 55% of the school's population.

The participants were selected from the population of students at the study site. The principal and the school system IRB Committee gave approval for the students to participate in the research study. Every third, fourth, and fifth grade student at the study site received a study packet. Of these students, 20 returned the study packet and were selected to participate in the dance classes over the two-week study period. There were 10 of the 20 students who completed the one-on-one interviews. Two alternates were selected for the 10 interviewed students, but these individuals were not needed. Among the students interviewed, six were fourth graders, four were third graders, and all were female. Two of the participants had physical disabilities. One alternated between dancing with crutches and dancing in a rolling chair. The other student only participated in the first week of classes and did not continue the second week due to her physical limitation. This participant was not an interviewee, so no alternate was needed.

Research Methodology

The school system IRB Committee required that I only distribute hard copies of the study packet to the prospective study participants. I was not permitted to contact participants via phone or email. The target population was third, fourth, and fifth graders at the study site, since they already had several years of Dance Integration class experience. Interested families completed the consent and assent forms (Appendices C & D) that were included in the study packet and returned the forms to me at the study site within one week of distribution. Parents or guardians also indicated on the consent form if they wanted their child to participate in the one-on-one interview and video recording part of the study. The interview and video recording required another set of consent and assent forms (Appendices F & G), as directed by the school system IRB Committee. The 10 interview participants were assigned an alphanumeric code based on the order the forms were returned.

Each interview participant was informed of her interview day at the beginning of the study period. One adjustment to the interview schedule was made due to an absence. On two different days, two separate interviews were done after class to complete all 10 interviews within the study period. All forms were copied, and the copies of the signed forms were distributed to the families prior to the beginning of the dance classes. At the end of each dance class, the interview participant of the day was video recorded during the end of class performance. Prior to beginning the interview, all study participants created artwork about how the dance class made her feel on that day (Nielsen & Burridge, 2015). The interviews took place immediately after the artwork was complete

to assist in the stimulated recall technique (Bloom, 1954; Guskey, 2012; Messmer, 2015; Stough, 2001).

Data Analysis

Initially, dance classes were created that were modeled after the *Showing Six* template. Participants danced, discussed, and observed before-school classes. Within these dance classes, participants were asked to create artwork that showed how they felt about their dance classes and created their own dance performances. During the dance performances, I took detailed, anecdotal notes that reflected my initial impressions of each dance. After each student created her own dance performance (and the rest of the students participated as the audience and watched), she was interviewed individually to allow an understanding of her own lived experience that occurred while participating in the class.

The following process was utilized for analyzing the interviews. After each interview, I transcribed the data within 24 hours. Member checking occurred to confirm the transcriptions were completed accurately. To ensure confidentiality of all participants, all audio and video recordings were destroyed following the transcription process.

A specific coding process was utilized to obtain accurate depictions of the data. During the initial analysis of the transcripts, open coding was used to name and categorize important words and phrases from the interviews (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). These words included *fun, happy, relaxing, free, not stressed, learning,* and *different ideas*. Following the open coding of responses, axial coding was used to

develop the important words and phrases into organized categories, and these categories were used to recognize commonalities in the data. To assist in this process, the categories were aligned with the interview questions. The participants all included the words *fun* and *free* in their interviews when discussing their thoughts and feelings about dance classes. These same words were also used when the students described their artwork about how the dance classes made them feel.

Next, the process of selective coding was used to derive the main idea from the previously recognized axial coding process. The main ideas of axial coding are condensed and considered in tandem for the researcher to fully understand the main idea that the participants described during their qualitative responses. The main idea that emerged from the interview data was that the participants feel and think the experience of dance classes as both a performer and observer are fun opportunities for learning in a free and relaxed environment. Finally, a detailed description of the commonalities was created using the words and actions of the participants (van Manen, 1990). The results of the data analysis were then used to describe the cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic experiences and reflections of elementary students in before-school dance classes.

Summary of the Findings

During the dance classes, the participants explored, demonstrated, and discovered ways to express the six elements of dance. Although each class focused on only one element, participants combined the elements of dance in their work. The results from the interviews indicated the participants were able to assimilate the elements of dance and were able to share these experiences during the performances and in the interviews.

After completing the coding of the interview data (see *Figure 1*) and examining the artwork for commonalities in the lived experience of dance classes, all the participants mentioned fun when describing their experience. Furthermore, the participants enjoyed the feeling of dancing, found dancing relaxing, and thought about how the creative process worked during a dance class. The interview participants reflected on the cognitive, kinesthetic, and creative process during the before-school dance classes and shared their unique lived experience.

These unique experiences were also seen through the participant's artwork. Many participants acknowledged that they felt as though dance class was fun and relaxing, something that was evident during analysis of the children's artwork. While each child drew something unique (e.g., a brain thinking about concepts, a butterfly, a group of friends), the pictures all related to the same ideas. For example, the drawings of the butterfly and brain were accompanied by the description "fun," while the group of friends, brain, and butterfly were accompanied by the description "relaxing."

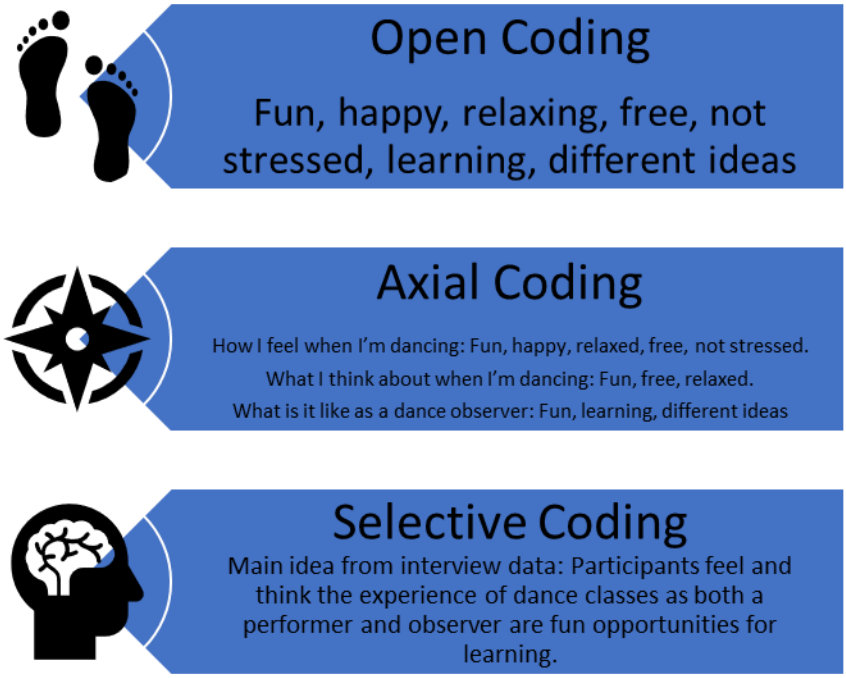

Figure 1: This figure delineates the type of coding and the words and phrases from the interview data used in the results of this study.

Presentation of the Data and Results

The dance classes and interviews were designed to answer the two research questions. The first question explored the experiences of elementary students with the elements of dance and the second question focused on the cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic reflections of the participants. Each of the dance classes emphasized one of the six elements of dance including body, movements, space, time, energy, and relationships (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011; Spratt, 2016; Piaget, 1947, 1962). Immediately after the dance classes, participants created artwork (Appendix H) that asked them to visually demonstrate how the class made them feel. The artwork provided additional data for the interview process and the overall study results (Nielsen & Burridge, 2015).

The interview questions asked the participants to recall their dance class experience with specific thoughts and feelings (Husserl, 1913; Piaget, 1947, 1962; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969; van Manen, 1990) and discuss the experience of being an audience member (Sheets-Johnstone, 2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b). Each interview participant also viewed a video of her end of class performance to assist in the stimulated recall of the experience (Bloom, 1954; Guskey, 2012; Messmer, 2015; Stough, 2001).

Question 1. Experiences.

What are the experiences of elementary students regarding assimilation of the elements of dance after participation in dance classes?

All 10 interview participants discussed aspects of the elements of dance during their interview. During the body element lesson, Z1 mentioned thinking about different body parts while dancing. The *explore* section of this lesson invited participants to use plastic skeleton bones for props. When Z1 explored different body parts with isolation, the skeleton bones were used to accentuate the isolated body part. This participant also used skeleton bones during the performance to further illustrate the element of body.

During the locomotor and non-locomotor movements lesson, Y2 mentioned enjoying the non-locomotor movements of twisting and bending. Another participant discussed seeing many locomotor movements in the performance video and the fact that the dancing correlated to the beat of the music. These observations reflect the combination of the dance elements of movements and time. Y2 also discussed the feeling of an explosion in the body while dancing. This reflection connects to the element of energy.

W4 recalled the use of the element of space, “I saw the circle moving and all of us moving around it.” Q10 talked about changing shapes in space during the performance. Based on previous dance class experience, V5 reflected on the element of time with reference to some different genres of dance. “In ballet, I feel like a lullaby, I feel calm. In jazz and hip hop, there is more activity.” V5 also enjoyed different locomotor and non-locomotor movements in the performance stating, “I really marched in the center. I was skipping. I can switch my arm and I like pulling.”

During the lesson on the element of relationships, T7 reported seeing a lot of dancing with a lot of people working together. This was also acknowledged in the artwork, where T7, W4, and X3 described their pictures as having fun in dance class as playing with friends. Throughout this lesson, pool noodles were used as props to enhance the movement possibilities for relationship vocabulary including on, off, far, near, over, under, in back, in front, around, and through. T7 described the class as “Dancing Rings of Friendship” as all the participants gathered in circles with the pool noodles connecting around them in different ways during the dance performance. R9 stated that at the beginning of dance class, the energy was tight, but as class continued, the feeling changed to loose and free energy. All 10 interview participants mentioned feeling free when dancing. This connects to the element of energy.

Question 2. Reflections.

What are the reflections of elementary students about the cognitive, kinesthetic, and creative processes after participation in dance classes?

Each participant mentioned the word *fun* during the one-on-one interviews. Dance class was described as an opportunity for fun and learning by four of the 10 interview participants. Z1 mentioned learning "fun facts about bones and different body parts." Q10, S8, and W4 talked about the experience of being an audience member as a fun way to watch and learn more. Y2 took her arms over her head and opened them wide while verbally describing dance class as a fun explosion. The artwork of Y2 was also described as a fun and colorful explosion (Appendix H). X3 connected the words fun and happy when asked about thoughts during dance classes. X3 stated, "Dance classes are fun. I think about really happy things like unicorns, sprinkles, glitter, and cake." She connected this to her experiences through drawing a doughnut with sprinkles and glitter.

When U6 was asked about thoughts during dance class, U6 exclaimed, "I usually am thinking about like how fun this would be if you really were doing it. Like today I was thinking, what if I really was a raindrop, would I really go through all of this? And how do I stay in a pond?" U6 described a cognitive, kinesthetic, and creative connection from her experience in the dance class that focused on the water cycle and the element of energy. This was coupled with an art piece that showed an elephant dancing in the rain. From a kinesthetic perspective, S8 stated that "everyone smiles in dance class, it's fun!" Y2 described dancing as a fun explosion of movements.

During the lesson that focused on the element of time, participants performed a snowflake dance inspired by the Waltz of the Snowflakes from *The Nutcracker* (Tchaikovsky, 2015). The participants used cotton balls as snowballs for a prop in this lesson. The two interview participants after this lesson described the action of throwing snowballs as fun and happy. V5 stated that she enjoys the feeling of dancing. S8 included the perspective of the audience too by stating, "Dancing is fun to watch and do." This was also reflected in her artwork, where she drew a group of audience members watching a dancer perform.

In each dance class, participants worked on dancing by exploring, planning, and revising the element of the day. During this creative work, Z1 and Y2 described the process as fun. W4 discussed a connection between watching everything happening as fun and knowing what you're doing but seeing how someone else does it provides opportunities for more fun and learning. When describing the group working together in the creative process, V5 stated, "I see everybody enjoying at the same time."

The artwork (Appendix H) created by the participants after each class (and before the interviews) provided additional cognitive and creative data. S8 said, "I drew a brain because it's thinking about smile, imagine, and love. It's thinking about dancing and you can imagine a lot of things in dance class." T7 said, "I did a bunch of colors and a bunch of my friends because I like that." Q10 talked about happiness and relaxation in this response, "I drew a lot of different things I like and that make me happy: rainbow, flowers, music, sun. This is all relaxing to me too." X3 connected the artwork to a favorite food and emotions with this response, "I made a doughnut. The yellow part um

where there's no frosting, it stands for emotions, and how I feel, and all the different colors remind me of a unicorn and I like doughnuts, so I drew this."

The theme of relaxation continued with the response about the artwork from W4, "I drew a butterfly with clouds and I felt relaxed and not like all frustrated and I was just really relaxed with what we did." When U6 discussed the artwork from the water cycle and energy lesson, the response involved one of the literary characters of Mo Willems named Gerald the Elephant (Willems, 2008). "In the book, Gerald didn't like rain, and Piggie was unhappy too, but eventually they both learned you can have fun in the rain. So, this is Gerald stomping in a puddle."

The artwork, coupled with the experience of being an audience member at the end of each dance class, also provided rich cognitive and descriptive data for the study. Z1 discussed how being an audience member allowed "you to see other people's point of view" and similarly, Y2 stated, "You see what they do and how they feel and how they're expressing themselves." W4 described being an audience member as fun and said, "It's like looking and seeing what you're doing, but how someone else does it." V5 talked about how being an audience member now inspires the future as a performer. "Since I've been an audience member and I'm in dances too, when I'm all grown, it kinda feels like, I'll do that someday." U6 liked to watch people dancing and described performances as interesting. U6 also liked to see how the performances end up. Q10 liked to see different people and the different ideas they bring to the class.

Summary

Chapter 4 presented an overview of this phenomenological study. This study sought to describe the experiences and reflections of elementary students in before-school dance classes, as this specific topic has not yet been explored by the literature. The two research questions focused on the assimilation of the elements of dance and the reflections of the cognitive, kinesthetic, and creative process of the participants during the dance classes as both performers and audience members.

The sample included 20 participants in the before-school dance classes and 10 interview participants from the 20 in the classes. The data for this phenomenological study included anecdotal notes and video recordings of the performances, interviews, and artwork. During the data analysis, the coding process revealed commonalities in the lived experience of the elementary students in before-school dance classes. Specifically, this commonality was that all participants felt as though dance class was a fun, relaxed, and stress-free environment in which to learn.

This chapter provided a description of the sample, the methodology, data analysis, research results, and a summary. Chapter five includes a discussion of the results, the relationship of the results to the literature, and implications of the results for practice, policy, and theory. The chapter then includes recommendations for future research and a conclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

Dance illustrates the human experience by connecting the elements of the lifeworld with other disciplines. Previous literature (e.g., Assaf, 2013; Botha, 2015; Okonski, 2016; Reason & Reynolds, 2010; Romita & Romita, 2016; Tagliabue & McIntyre, 2013) has provided support for this study by showcasing the fact that dance is not only a physical sport and allows students to benefit from increased verbal and non-verbal communication skills. While these aspects have been previously acknowledged, phenomenological research that centers on students' lived experiences has yet to be explored. This study sought to examine exactly what students in dance classes are thinking, feeling, experiencing, and perceiving.

Throughout this study, the elements of dance are explored though a series of lessons designed to elicit descriptions of the cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic experiences of elementary students who participate in these lessons. Observations, video recordings, anecdotal notes, student artwork, and interviews provided data for this phenomenological study. Through the utilization of the National Core Arts Standards (2014), a dance course was taught with the intent of eliciting experiences and reflections from the selected elementary students. The results from this study may provide insight into the experiences and reflections of elementary students in before-school dance classes.

Overall, this study acknowledged that students in an elementary school dance class saw the class as a fun, relaxing, and low-stress environment in which to explore

movement and enjoy time with classmates and friends. This chapter builds on these results and seeks to contextualize them within the scope of the literature. This chapter includes a summary and discussion of the results as they relate to the literature, limitations of the study, implications of the results for practice, policy, and theory, recommendations for further research, and a conclusion.

Summary of the Results

Within this study I focused on the experiences and reflections of elementary students in dance classes. There were 20 students who participated in the dance classes over the two-week study period. Each of these 20 students completed artwork to reflect their thoughts and feelings that they had during the class. Of these 20 participants, there were 10 who completed a one-on-one interview after class to share their unique lived experience of the dance class. Interview participants also discussed their artwork as it related to the dance class experience. The goal of discussing the artwork was to add more cognitive and creative data to the study. Video recordings of the performances were used during the interviews to assist with the stimulated recall technique (Bloom, 1954; Guskey, 2012; Messmer, 2015; Stough, 2001).

The main idea of the student's responses revealed dance classes were an opportunity for fun and learning. Results also indicated the interview participants were able to assimilate the elements of dance during the classes and in their everyday life. The artwork associated with the meaning of the dance classes indicated a variety of cognitive and creative connections, including literary references and feelings of happiness and relaxation during the kinesthetic experiences.

Discussion of the Results

The terms fun and learning were the two largest components that comprised students' free responses to both the interview questions as well as their artwork. These responses allowed me to understand that participants saw these dance classes not as an opportunity for physical development and neurological growth, but as opportunities for relaxation, socialization, and fun. Results from this study indicate that participants were able to generalize the feelings felt within the dance classes to their everyday life. While dance classes have been previously acknowledged to allow for a more efficient brain-body connection, the participants in this study were able to take this a step further. This was seen not only within the interviews, but within the artwork as well. The artwork showed that the participants were creating a variety of creative and cognitive reflections, and were even assimilating outside elements into their pieces of art.

These kinds of kinesthetic, creative, and emotional connections have not been previously seen in the literature. Participants in this study were able to create these connections specifically through the before-school dance classes. The lived experiences embodied by the students within this study allow for researchers to definitively see the physical, emotional, and mental benefits afforded by this type of dance instruction.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

In this phenomenological study, I sought to discover the lived experience of elementary students in dance classes. I divided the literature into three categories including Experiences and Reflections of Dance, Educational Applications of Dance, and Kinesthetic Connections of Dance. Numerous studies incorporated videography to assist

in recording the experiences and reflections of the participants. In this study, video recordings were used during the interviews to assist the participants in the stimulated recall technique (Bloom, 1954; Guskey, 2012; Messmer, 2015; Stough, 2001). Nielsen (2012: 2015) and Parviainen (2011) also incorporated the use of videography in their studies for the purposes of observation, as well as to monitor skill development throughout the academic year.

The student's experiences and reflections also considered connections to the dance experience. Just as the elementary students in this study connected their dance class experience to their cognitive experience, so have other researchers (e.g., Cuervo, 2013; Franko, 2011; Ness 2011; Pakes, 2011; Reinders et al., 2015; Warburton, 2011a). In particular, Pakes (2011) considered Husserl's (1913) phenomenological experience regarding the cognitive processes of perceiving, remembering, and imagining. In this study, 10 participants described their experiences from their memories of dance classes. Of note, one student created a drawing with a brain that included the word *imagine*. This student stated, "You can imagine a lot of things in dance class."

The author made connections with the elements of dance in the literature review. Cuervo's (2013) study focused on the dance elements of time and space. This connects to Piaget and Inhelder's (1969) study that focused on how students in the concrete operational stage reacted to time and space in their environment. All the participants in this study are in the concrete operational stage as determined by the developmental stages of Piaget (1947). Participants shared several descriptions about *time* and *space*, including dance being a big explosion of movements, everyone marching in time to the rhythm,

dancing to the beat, and the experience of everyone moving around in a big circle. All of these descriptions relate to different elements of dance and demonstrate the students were able to assimilate the different elements during their interviews.

Franck (2014) used Husserl's (1913) studies of embodiment to discuss the connection between the visual and tactile systems. Husserl described a continuous consciousness that exists from the visual stimulus, to the cognitive recognition, to the body's kinesthetic response. Husserl stated that this experience extends to an awareness of the phenomenon. Participants in this phenomenological study combined the visual, cognitive, and kinesthetic systems to solve creative problems presented in the daily dance classes. One participant talked about seeing the water, becoming the water, and then shared a literary connection of one of her favorite stories involving rain. This participant's description exhibits a continuous consciousness as modeled by Husserl.

Richardson's (2013) study discussed examples of T.S. Eliot's writings after Eliot experienced dance as an audience member. Eliot described movement as a non-verbal expression of emotions, an experience that also resonated with the participants in this study. When describing dance classes, one participant used the term *emotioning.* The participant, S8, said, "They're helpful to get stress out and they're just really fun." Another participant, Y2, recalled the experience of being an audience member with this statement: "You see what they do and how they feel and how they're expressing themselves." These participant reflections supported the writings of Eliot and showed a commonality in the experiences of audience members viewing the dance. These decriptions make a connection between the performer and the audience member.

To connect more directly with the data and assist with my own recall, I also completed anecdotal notes of the performances to further support the data from the interviews and artwork. My role was to find commonalities in the data to describe the lived experience of the participants (Nielsen & Burridge, 2015; Reinders et al., 2015; Sheets-Johnstone, 1979). Although each experience is unique, sufficient evidence of similar experiences among the participants in this study was found to indicate similarities might be found as well too.

Several educational applications have studied the experience of dance classes focusing on creativity instead of prescribed movements (Kranicke & Pruitt, 2012; Matthews et al., 2016; Valverde & Cochrane, 2013). The dance classes in this study also focused on creativity rather than prescribed movements. This dance class structure (see Lesson Plans, Appendix I) allowed students to explore, plan, and revise their ideas using their cognitive, kinesthetic, and creative potential. In the interview responses, the participants described the creative process in a variety of ways. One participant, Y2, described twisting, bending, and exploding movements as *being free*. Another participant, U6, described the performance created after the water cycle lesson with these details: "I saw a river. I saw rain and I also saw there was no…I couldn't see the water at one point because it was just little tiny water molecules." Still another participant (S8) mentioned the opportunity to imagine in dance class. These examples highlight the connections between the cognitive, kinesthetic, and creative process of the dance classes in this study. Several other studies focused on the use of imagination in the teaching and learning process (Burridge, 2010; Giguere, 2011; Minetola, Serr, & Nelson, 2012;

Sansom, 2009; Tsouvala & Magos, 2016). Throughout the experience of dance classes, study participants engaged their imaginations to create a variety of dance performances. These performances included a body part dance with plastic skeleton bones, a shape bag dance incorporating locomotor and non-locomotor movements, a scarf dance exploring space, a rhythm dance using Octabands, a water cycle dance using blue plastic table cloths for water and cotton balls for snow, and a relationship dance using pool noodles.

Limitations of the Study

Since the study site IRB committee required me to conduct the study before or after school, this limited the number of participants in the study. Furthermore, I was only permitted to distribute study packets as hard copies. Prohibiting me from contacting participants via email or phone with study information limited the number of potential participants in the study. With these limitations, the only students who participated in the study were female and were interested in dance. Being able to do the study during the school day would include participants who study dance, but who are not as passionate about the art form. The study would also include males and females.

As a dance educator for more than 30 years, I bracketed my experiences and reflections on the data (Creswell, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Richards & Morse, 2013) and relied totally on the experiences and reflections of the study participants in the research results. By bracketing, I discovered the essence of the lived experiences of the participants (Husserl, 1913, 1931; Johnson & Christensen, 2014; van Manen, 1990). Bracketing also allowed me to separate my preconceived notions from what was occurring in the data, and allowed me to perform a better, more objective analysis.

A final limitation of the study is the sample size. Though phenomenological research typically utilizes smaller sample sizes (Connelly, 2010), allowing for only 10 participants narrows the scope of the experiences accounted for within this study. Specifically, the fact that the participants were all female, and all came from the same school (therefore potentially having similar races, socioeconomic status, and experiences with dance education; Lucas & Berends, 2002) may have limited the breadth of answers that were given in both the interviews, dances, and works of art that the students created. However, a sample size of 10 allows for generalization within populations of a similar makeup and allows for researchers to create more studies based on this study.

Implications of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory

This phenomenological study was based upon the work of Husserl (1913, 1931), Sheets-Johnstone (1979, 2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b), and Piaget (1947, 1962). Husserl's theory of phenomenology was explored in the lived experience of the participants during the dance classes. Then, the process continued with the interviews to describe their unique experience and discover the essence of the phenomenon of dance classes for the elementary student (Husserl, 1913, 1931). Sheets-Johnstone explored phenomenology and how it relates to dance (1979, 2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b). The study participants were involved as students, performers, and audience members. Sheets-Johnstone described each dance as a lived experience for the dancer, the choreographer, and the audience member.

The study participants embodied each role as described by Sheets-Johnstone and then 10 participants shared a reflection of those roles during the interview process.

Piaget (1947, 1962) observed children in their natural environment and based his theories around the development of the child. In the natural environment, Piaget and his colleague Inhelder (1969) discussed the tactile-kinesthetic moments, the use of space, and the time or rhythmic structure as the children experienced the environment. Piaget's work relates to the elements of dance used during each lesson. Another connection to Piaget's work is that each dance lesson in the study provided the participants with a prop to serve as a tactile-kinesthetic object in their environment, especially since some of the participants mentioned the props during their interview. The study participants also described the use of the dance elements of body, movements, space, time, energy, and relationships relative to their dance class experience.

Faber's (2016) article included a call to action for administrators and policy makers to include more dance education programs in early childhood education. Faber discussed the connections between motor development and neurological development and described how dance education offers an opportunity to explore this connection unlike traditional classroom learning.

Recommendations for Transformational Change

Since this study was limited to 20 class participants and 10 interview participants, the study size was small. Future research could be done with a larger sample size and a variety of schools including private, parochial, and charter schools. Completing a research study with the teachers and administrators of elementary dance programs could provide data about a different population of stakeholders involved in dance education. A longitudinal study regarding the lived experience of students who had dance education

throughout their elementary school tenure could also add to the field of research in dance programming. Connecting this study even further with students who study dance from Kindergarten through twelfth grade would add another perspective to dance education research.

Faber (2016) suggested more early childhood dance programs be added to schools so research regarding the connection of neurological development and motor development can be done. Seidel's (2016) recent research on the legacy of Isadora Duncan suggested a return to the creative approach in dance education with an emphasis on cultivating a physical consciousness in students to further develop their creativity. Both Faber's and Seidel's research supports the mandates of the *Every Students Succeeds Act* (2015) with a focus on critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity.

Conclusion

This phenomenological study explored the experiences and reflections of elementary students in before-school dance classes. The research questions sought to describe the assimilation of the elements of dance and the experiences and reflections regarding the cognitive, kinesthetic, and creative process during dance class. I used self-designed data collection tools and developed lessons for the study based on the six elements of dance and the supporting literature. Other data included anecdotal notes and participant created artwork completed after each dance class. Data from the interviews were analyzed using coding suggestions from Johnson and Christiansen (2014) to discover the commonalities of the lived experience (Husserl, 1913; Sheets-Johnstone, 2015b; van Manen, 1990) of elementary students in before-school dance classes.

Dance illustrates the human experience by connecting the elements of the lifeworld with other disciplines. Previous literature (e.g., Assaf, 2013; Botha, 2015; Okonski, 2016; Reason & Reynolds, 2010; Romita & Romita, 2016; Tagliabue & McIntyre, 2013) has provided support for this study by showcasing the fact that dance is not only a physical sport. Instead, dance classes allow students to benefit from increased verbal and non-verbal communication skills, as well as assist in the development of cognitive processes of the students who participate in them. While these aspects have been previously acknowledged, phenomenological research that centers on student's actual lived experiences has yet to be explored. This study aimed to help fill this gap in the research literature and examined exactly what students in dance classes think, feel, experience, and perceive.

Dance education is a rarity in most school systems as well as a low priority in the elementary school curriculum (Robinson, 2015), though it has been shown by previous research to be incredibly useful to a student's mental and physical development. In dance classes, students have opportunities for collaboration, communication, critical analysis, and creative problem solving in a kinesthetic focused environment (Robinson, 2015; Minton & Faber, 2016; Gilbert, 2006). Throughout this study, I explored the elements of dance though a series of lessons designed to elicit descriptions of the cognitive, creative, and kinesthetic experiences of elementary students who participate in these lessons. Observations, video recordings, anecdotal notes, student artwork, and interviews provided data for this phenomenological study. I taught elementary students dance lessons reflective of the National Core Arts Standards (2014) to elicit experiences and

reflections from the selected elementary students. The results from this study may provide insight into the experiences and reflections of elementary students in dance classes.

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Appendix A: School Principal Approval Letter

October 2017

To Whom It May Concern,

Karen Kuebler is working with students at [redacted] during the fall semester of 2017 as a part of her doctoral dissertation. Kuebler's dissertation is a phenomenological study focusing on the lived experiences of elementary students in dance classes. The students will be video recorded and interviewed by Kuebler during the research process. Kuebler will have parental/guardian permission for all students participating in the research.

As the school's principal, I understand the goal of this process is the completion of Kuebler's doctoral dissertation. As a school that celebrates the growth mindset and instruction that supports the arts, I look forward to the possibilities for our students as research participants in this doctoral study.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

[redacted]

Appendix B: School System IRB Approval

[redacted]

To: Kuebler, Karen C.

[redacted]

[redacted]

Good Afternoon Ms. Campbell Kuebler,

Thank you for your request to conduct research in

[redacted] Your proposal, A Phenomenological Study of Elementary Students in Dance Classes has been approved.

The approval is applicable for the 2017-2018 academic year. Any changes to the research protocol or deviation in timeline must be submitted to

[redacted]

Good luck with your research.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

Appendix C: Parent and Guardian Consent for Study

Concordia University – Portland Institutional Review Board
Approved: July 30, 2017; will Expire: July 20, 2018

CONSENT FORM

Research Study Title: A Phenomenological Study of Elementary School Students in Dance Classes
Principal Investigator: Karen Campbell Kuebler
Research Institution: Concordia University
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Christopher Maddox

Purpose and what your student will be doing:

Within this study, I will provide insight of student perspectives of the dance experience. The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the cognitive, kinesthetic, and creative experiences and reflections of elementary students in before school dance classes.

This consent is for participation in the doctoral study. Students will participate in eight before school dance classes. The classes will take place in the rotunda from 8-8:45am December 4th through December 14th. The classes will focus on how students think, move, and create using the elements of dance.

There will be anecdotal notes and video recordings of the individual performances at the end of the dance classes for this research study. The video recordings will not be posted publicly in any form.

One or two students will be interviewed after each of the eight before school dance classes for a total of ten interview students. The one-on-one interviews include open-ended questions. The student responses will guide whether the next question will be asked so not all questions may be used. All parents or guardians will receive a copy of the interview questions in the research study packet.

During the interviews, students will respond to questions and view a video recording of their end of class performance to assist with the stimulated recall technique. no other students will be in the performance video. Students will also complete drawings of their reflections during the one-on-one interviews.

☐ Please check in the box if you would like your child to be considered to participate in the video recorded one-on-one interview. If your child is selected for the one-on-one interview, you will receive a separate consent form and your child will receive a separate assent form for the video recorded one-on-one interview.

Risks:

The risks to participating in this study include providing information, participating in the before school dance classes, and answering interview questions. Your identity and your child's identity will be kept private and secure in any report or publication. For the study, any name or identifying information given will be kept securely via electronic encryption or locked inside my office. I will only use a secret code to analyze the data. I will not identify participants in any publication or report. The video recordings will not be posted publicly in any form. The video recordings will be transcribed, checked for accuracy, and will then be deleted. All other study information will be kept private until three years after the study, and then be destroyed.

Confidentiality:

This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if a student tells us about abuse or neglect that makes us seriously concerned for the immediate health and safety of the student.

To protect your personal identifying information, the video will be kept only long enough to complete the data analysis for this study. The analysis will only be done by the principal investigator. The video will not be posted publicly in any form. After the analysis, the video recordings will be destroyed. All other study documents will be kept for three years after conclusion of the study, as required by law, and then all documents will be destroyed.

Right to Withdraw:

Participation is greatly appreciated, but we acknowledge that some students may choose to stop their participation. Participants are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. During the one-on-one interviews, participants may skip any questions they do not wish to answer. This study is voluntary. It is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If the participant experiences a negative emotion from participating in the before school dance class or answering questions, the student will be stopped.

Contact Information:

You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions you can talk to or write the principal investigator, Karen Campbell Kuebler at [redacted]. If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch (email obranch@cu-portland.edu or call 503-493-6390).

Your Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for my child to participate in this before-school study.

Student's name: _____

_____ _____

Parent or Guardian Name Date

_____ _____

Parent or Guardian Signature Date

Karen Campbell Kuebler November 27, 2017

Investigator Name Date

_____

Investigator Signature

Investigator: Karen Campbell Kuebler [redacted]
c/o: Dr. Christopher Maddox,
Concordia University – Portland
2811 NE Holman Street
Portland, Oregon 97221

Appendix D: Student Assent to Participate in Study

Title: A Phenomenological Study of elementary Students in Dance Classes
Dissertation Chair: Dr. Christopher Maddox
Doctoral Candidate: Karen Campbell Kuebler [redacted]
Concordia University – Portland

What will happen during the study?

My parent or guardian signed a consent form for me to participate in a voluntary before school Dance Class Study. The study will take place in the fall of 2017.

Mrs. Kuebler will teach the dance classes, video record individual performances at the end of the classes, and complete video recorded interviews with select students. Mrs. Kuebler will not post the videos publicly in any form.

During this study I will dance, ask and answer questions, and talk with my friends. Mrs. Kuebler will not use my name in any part of the study. Mrs. Kuebler will only use a secret code to write about my information.

Mrs. Kuebler will delete the videos after she writes the words down and checks to make sure the information is correct. The other study information will be kept private for three years and then be destroyed. This follows the rules for research.

Can I stop the study?

I can stop participating in the study at any time.

Who can I talk to if I have a question about the study?

I will get a copy of this form. If I have any questions, I can ask Mrs. Kuebler. My parents can also contact the Director of the Institutional Review Board at Concordia University, Dr. OraLee Branch (email obranch@cu-portland.edu or call 503-493-6390).

I read the information, I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered.

I will receive a copy of this form after it is signed.

I can participate in this study.

My name _____

My signature _____

Date _____

Karen Campbell Kuebler November 27, 2017

Investigator Name Date

_____

Investigator Signature

Appendix E: Interview Questions

The following questions were used during each interview:

1. Tell me about the before-school dance classes which you've been participating in.
2. What do you think about when you're dancing?
3. How do you feel when you're dancing?
4. Let's look at the video of your end of class performance today…tell me about what you see.
5. What is it like being an observer?
6. You drew a picture of the dance class. Can you tell me about your artwork?
7. Anything else you'd like to add?

Interviews lasted no longer than 10 minutes.

Appendix F: Parent and Guardian Consent to Video Recording and Interview

Title: A Phenomenological Study of Elementary Students in Dance Classes
Dissertation Chair: Dr. Christopher Maddox
Doctoral Candidate: Karen Campbell Kuebler
[redacted]
Concordia University – Portland

Participants are third, fourth, and fifth graders at
[redacted]
Student's Name:
_____
Date: Fall 2017
Address:
[redacted]
Phone: [redacted]

The video recorded one-on-one interviews will be used as a part of a doctoral research study by Karen Campbell Kuebler at [redacted] to fulfill the requirements of the Doctor of Education Degree.

I have already provided written consent for the participation of my child in this research study. This consent form is specifically for video recording the one-on-one interviews of your student. The video recordings will not be posted publicly in any form.

As the principal investigator, only I will have access to the videos. The videos will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my home office. The videos will be transcribed in my home office, checked for accuracy, and then deleted as soon as possible.

The video recorded one-on-one interviews will be completed during the study period in the fall of 2017. The transcriptions of the video recordings will be done as soon as possible, checked for accuracy, and then deleted. I understand that pseudonyms will be used in the study and my child's name will not be used at all.

One or two students will be interviewed after each of the before school dance classes for a total of 10 interview students.

The one-on-one interviews include open-ended questions. The student responses will guide whether the next question will be asked, so not all questions may be used. All parents or guardians will receive a copy of the interview questions in the research study packet.

During the interviews, students will respond to questions and view a video recording of their end of class performance to assist with the stimulated recall technique. Students will also complete drawings of their reflections.

I give permission for my child to participate in the video recorded one-on-one interview during the research study period in the Fall of 2017.

Parent or Guardian signature:

_____

Parent or Guardian name (Please print.):

_____

Email (Please print):

_____

Date: _____

Appendix G: Student Assent to Video Recording and Interview

Title: A Phenomenological Study of Elementary Students in Dance Classes
Dissertation Chair: Dr. Christopher Maddox
Doctoral Candidate: Karen Campbell Kuebler
[redacted]
Concordia University – Portland

I am a student at [redacted]
My name is _____.
Date: Fall 2017
Address: [redacted]
School Phone: [redacted]

My parent or guardian signed a consent form for me to participate in a before school Dance Class Study. My parent or guardian also signed a consent form for me to be in the select group of ten students with five alternates to participate in a video recorded one-on-one interview during the study.

The study will take place before school during the fall of 2017. The video recorded one-on-one interview will take place immediately after the before school dance classes. Mrs. Kuebler will video record the one-on-one interviews as further data collection for her study.

As one of the 10 students doing an interview, I know I will be looking at a video recording of my performance at the end of the dance class to help me recall what happened during the class and respond to the interview questions.

I know that Mrs. Kuebler will observe the video recordings, write down the information, check to make sure it is correct, and then delete it. Mrs. Kuebler will not post the videos publicly in any form.

If I choose to not participate in the video recorded one-on-one interview, I can stop at any time. I do not need to answer all the questions during the interview.

By signing below, I can participate in the video recorded one-on-one interview.

My signature _____

Date _____

Appendix H: Student Artwork


Y2

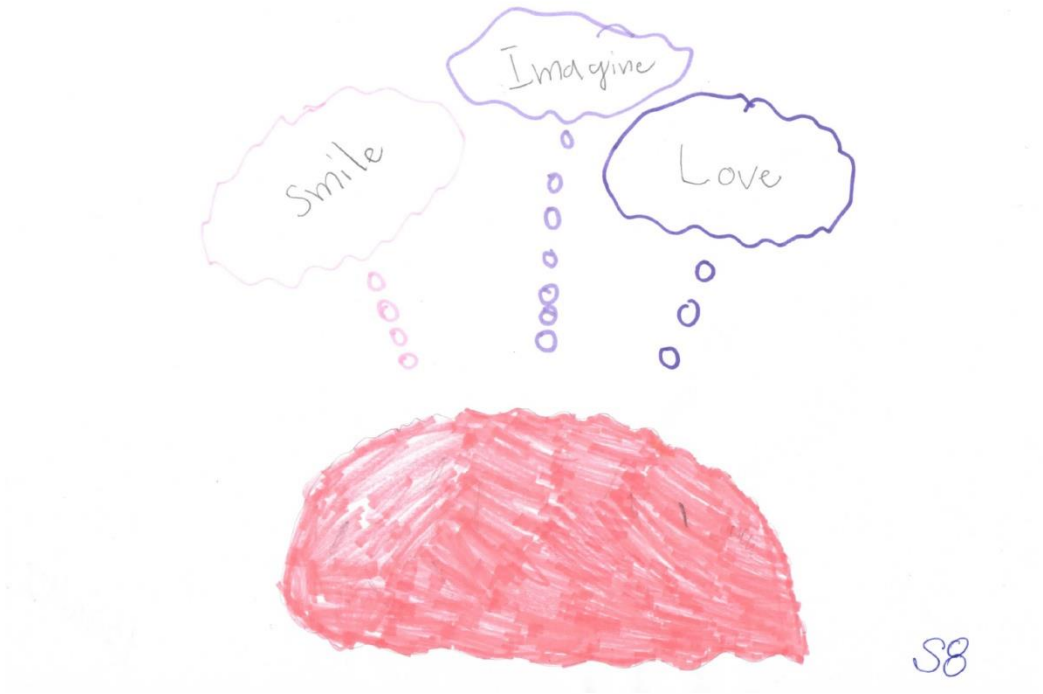
~~X~~3

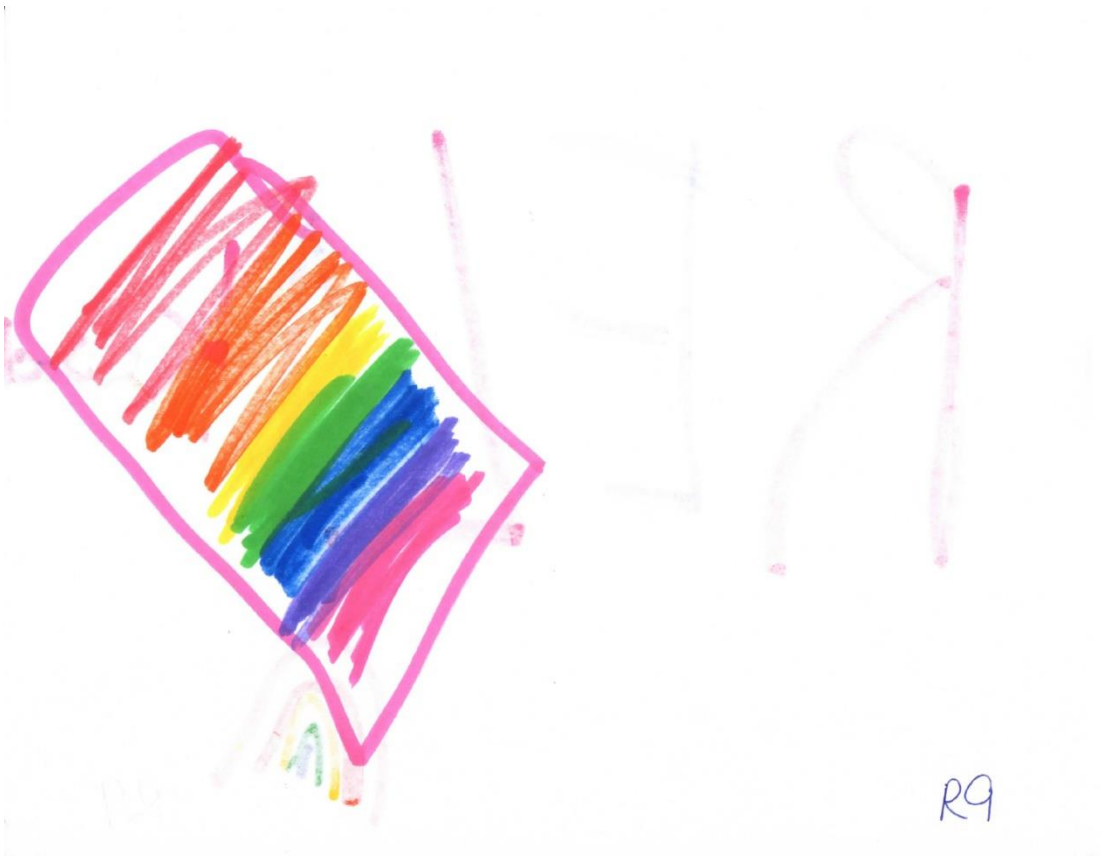

W4


V5


V5


this is so much FUN
U6


Imagine
Smile
Love
S8


R9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Free
Relaxed
Q10

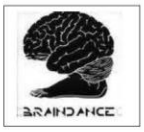
Appendix I: Lesson Plans

Showing Six

With the adoption of the National Core Arts Standards (2014) and the incorporation of *The Daily 5* (Boushey & Moser, 2006) in elementary classrooms, this is a dance class version entitled **Showing Six.** These six components of every dance class mirror the activities of *The Daily 5* and serve to reinforce the skills the students are practicing in a kinesthetic way.

Lesson 1 Element of Dance: Body

1. **Dance Word Work**: skeleton, head, shoulders, knees, toes, spine (cervical, thoracic, lumbar), isolation



2. **Work on Dancing**:
   Explore isolating different body parts.
   Plan body part dance phrase.
   Revise phrase based on peer feedback and discussion.

3. **Dance with Someone**: Develop a group body part dance phrase highlighting at least three different body parts using isolation.

4. **Connecting Dance to Me**: Discussion of skeleton and skeletal names of body parts, biology connections, and the location, anatomy, and actions of the spine.

5. **Perform a Dance**: Each individual and/or group performs their body part dance.

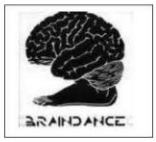
6. **Respond to Dance**: Participants discuss each performance using analysis, critique, and interpretation based on the assessment requirements.

Showing Six

With the adoption of the National Core Arts Standards (2014) and the incorporation of *The Daily 5* (Boushey & Moser, 2006) in elementary classrooms, this is a dance class version entitled **Showing Six.** These six components of every dance class mirror the activities of *The Daily 5* and serve to reinforce the skills the students are practicing in a kinesthetic way.

Lesson 2 Element of Dance: Moves

1. **Dance Word Work**:
   Locomotor: run, hop, skip, slide, walk, leap, jump, gallop
   Non-locomotor: pull, kick, rise, melt, turn, push, float, twist, bend, swing, burst, reach, wiggle (prop is shape bags)



2. **Work on Dancing**:
   Explore locomotor movements without the shape bag, explore non-locomotor movements with the shape bag.
   Plan locomotor and non-locomotor movement dance phrase with shape bag.
   Revise phrase based on peer feedback and discussion.

3. **Dance with Someone**: Develop a group dance phrase highlighting at least five movements from the word work list. Dance phrase must have evidence of locomotor and non-locomotor movements.

4. **Connecting Dance to Me**: Discussion of how different movements are done. Discussion of sculptures and how it feels to dance inside the shape bag. Discussion of positive and negative space in art and dance.

5. **Perform a Dance**: Each individual and/or group performs their locomotor, non-locomotor dance phrase.

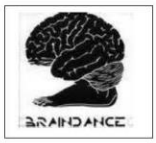
6. **Respond to Dance**: Participants discuss each performance using analysis, critique, and interpretation based on the assessment requirements.

Showing Six

With the adoption of the National Core Arts Standards (2014) and the incorporation of *The Daily 5* (Boushey & Moser, 2006) in elementary classrooms, this is a dance class version entitled **Showing Six.** These six components of every dance class mirror the activities of *The Daily 5* and serve to reinforce the skills the students are practicing in a kinesthetic way.

Lesson 3 Element of Dance: Space

1. **Dance Word Work**: directions: up, down, side, back, front, around; size: small, medium, large; place: kinesphere; levels: low, middle, high; focus: direct, indirect; pathways: curved, straight, zig zag, circular



2. **Work on Dancing**:
Explore the space with a large scarf changing direction, size of movement, kinesphere, levels, focus, and pathways.
Plan an individual dance phrase that includes at least three explorations of space.
Revise phrase based on peer feedback and discussion.

3. **Dance with Someone**: Develop a group dance phrase highlighting at least six words from the word work list. Dance phrase must have evidence of moving through space with the large scarf in at least six different ways.

4. **Connecting Dance to Me**: Discussion of different ways to manipulate the space and how the kinesphere changes with the addition of the scarf. Discussion of the connection to creating art work by painting the space with the scarf. Discussion of Loie Fuller from the early 1900s and the use of material to create different illusions in space.

5. **Perform a Dance**: Each individual and/or group performs their exploration of space dance.

6. **Respond to Dance**: Participants discuss each performance using analysis, critique, and interpretation based on the assessment requirements.

Showing Six

With the adoption of the National Core Arts Standards (2014) and the incorporation of *The Daily 5* (Boushey & Moser, 2006) in elementary classrooms, this is a dance class version entitled **Showing Six.** These six components of every dance class mirror the activities of *The Daily 5* and serve to reinforce the skills the students are practicing in a kinesthetic way.

Lesson 4 Element of Dance: Time

1. **Dance Word Work**: tempo: slow, medium, fast; meter: 4/4 March, ¾ Waltz; rhythm, accent, Tchaikovsky, Petipa, *The Nutcracker*

2. **Work on Dancing**:
   Explore two different dances from *The Nutcracker* including the March in 4/4 time and the Waltz of the Snowflakes in ¾ time.
   Plan how to move with others in space and time using an Octaband for the March.
   Plan a snow dance using cotton balls for the snow and include tempo changes and different accents based on the music.
   Revise phrase based on peer feedback and discussion.

3. **Dance with Someone**: Develop a large group dance with the Octaband using the 4/4 March from *The Nutcracker*. Develop a ¾ waltz phrase using cotton balls for the snow. Show evidence of the different tempos and meters in the selected movements.

4. **Connecting Dance to Me**: Discussion of Nutcracker Ballet history from 1892 to present day including economic and cultural connections. Discuss personal Nutcracker history.

5. **Perform a Dance**: Everyone performs the 4/4 March with the selected movement vocabulary and the Octaband. Small groups perform the ¾ Waltz of the Snowflakes with evidence of tempo changes and different accents connected to the music.

6. **Respond to Dance**: Participants discuss each performance using analysis, critique, and interpretation based on the assessment requirements.

Showing Six

With the adoption of the National Core Arts Standards (2014) and the incorporation of *The Daily 5* (Boushey & Moser, 2006) in elementary classrooms, this is a dance class version entitled **Showing Six.** These six components of every dance class mirror the activities of *The Daily 5* and serve to reinforce the skills the students are practicing in a kinesthetic way.

Lesson 5 Element of Dance: Energy

1. **Dance Word Work**: energy, free, light, sharp, bound, strong, smooth, water cycle, collection, evaporation, condensation, precipitation, rain, sleet, hail, snow, freeze

2. **Work on Dancing**:
Explore the water cycle four times with different collection areas including river, waterfall, whirlpool, and pond. Change the type of precipitation each time beginning with rain and continuing with sleet, hail, and snow. Prop is blue plastic table cloth strips. Use one in each hand. Plan how to change the energy of the movements based on the action of the water cycle. Revise the water cycle dance phrase based on peer feedback and discussion.

3. **Dance with Someone**: Develop a small group water cycle dance using at least three energy changes during the cycle.

4. **Connecting Dance to Me**: Discussion of water cycle movements and how the energy changes from collection, to evaporation, to condensation, to precipitation. Discuss other life cycles. Share a personal water story.

5. **Perform a Dance**: Everyone performs water cycle dance in small groups.

6. **Respond to Dance**: Participants discuss each performance using analysis, critique, and interpretation based on the assessment requirements.

Showing Six

With the adoption of the National Core Arts Standards (2014) and the incorporation of *The Daily 5* (Boushey & Moser, 2006) in elementary classrooms, this is a dance class version entitled **Showing Six.** These six components of every dance class mirror the activities of *The Daily 5* and serve to reinforce the skills the students are practicing in a kinesthetic way.

Lesson 6 Element of Dance: Relationships

1. **Dance Word Work**: relationships, on, off, far, near, over, under, in back, in front, around, through, kinesphere

2. **Work on Dancing**:
Explore relationship vocabulary using pool noodles to interact with the body.
Plan a relationship dance phrase including four different relationship movements.
Revise the relationship dance phrase based on peer discussion and feedback.

3. **Dance with Someone**: Develop a small group dance phrase including relationship movements between the people and the pool noodles.

4. **Connecting Dance to Me**: Discussion of architecture and relationship of people in and around space. Discussion of favorite spaces and the relationships within that space.

5. **Perform a Dance**: Each group performs their relationship dance phrase.

6. **Respond to Dance**: Participants discuss each performance using analysis, critique, and interpretation based on the assessment requirements.

Appendix J: Statement of Original Work

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University-Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with the research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association.*

Digital Signature

Karen Campbell Kuebler

Name (Typed)

January 15th, 2018

Date